

THE RED CAVALIER

By
GLADYS EDSON
LOCKE



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"THE FIGURE DARTED ACROSS THE TERRACE AND
VANISHED IN THE NIGHT."

(See page 57)

THE RED CAVALIER

OR
THE TWIN TURRETS MYSTERY

BY GLADYS EDSON LOCKE

WITH A FRONTISPIECE IN FULL COLOR
FROM A PAINTING BY
CHARLES E. BARNES



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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. MISS VANDELIA VENTURES	1
II. THE VENTURE ASSUMES PROPORTIONS	12
III. MAX	25
IV. TWIN TURRETS.	35
V. THE FIGURE ON THE TERRACE	49
VI. THE BROKEN IDOLS	58
VII. GUESTS ARRIVE	70
VIII. THE RED CAVALIER	80
IX. A NIGHT OF MYSTERY	91
X. ANOTHER MYSTERY	99
XI. THE COSTUME BALL	114
XII. GOLD SPANGLES	127
XIII. A MATTER OF OPINION	138
XIV. THE TOWER ON THE CLIFFS.	146
XV. BULLETS OF SALT	155
XVI. THE PAPER IN CYPHER	166
XVII. ONE MYSTERY FOR ANOTHER	177
XVIII. WHERE IS LONA?	188
XIX. THE CURTAIN RISES	198
XX. THE INQUEST	209

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXI. A QUESTION OF COSTUME	227
XXII. A QUESTION OF IDENTITY	237
XXIII. THRUST AND COUNTER	250
XXIV. THE HOUSE ON THE SEA WALL	262
XXV. "MISS WILTON"	276
XXVI. DOUBTS AND SUSPICIONS	290
XXVII. IN SIR ROBERT'S CHAMBER	301
XXVIII. THE CAVALIER UNMASKED	310
XXIX. ON THE TRAIL	324
XXX. THE EYES OF BRAHMA	337
XXXI. GATHERING UP THE THREADS	351
XXXII. AFTER THE STORM	364

THE RED CAVALIER

CHAPTER I

MISS VANDELIA VENTURES

LORD BORROWDEAN heaved a sigh of boredom and, adjusting his monocle, stared languidly about the scantily filled lecture-hall. Lectures always proved tedious to the young man and he had come to this particular one simply because he felt it his duty to the lecturer, who was one of his lordship's numerous protégés.

As Borrowdean's monocled eye swept over the audience, some members of which appeared mildly interested, and others as hopelessly bored as he, his notice was attracted to an extremely aristocratic, rather formidable-looking woman of middle age seated just across the aisle. She held herself stiffly erect, all attention to the lecturer, her sharp grey eyes never shifting from his face as he described, in what seemed to Borrowdean wearisome detail, the history and architecture of an old Castle in Yorkshire, whose two ancient towers, whence came its name "Twin Turrets," were said to date back to the Wars of the Roses.

Borrowdean smiled to himself at Miss Vandelia Egerton's absorption. He remembered that the study of the antiquities of England amounted with her almost to a passion, if so intense a term could be applied to the pursuits of a well-ordered British spinster and high-churchwoman. Miss Vandelia possessed but this one little weakness, unless perhaps, an almost doting affection for her handsome nephew, Max, could be placed in the same category. But then what woman was there who did not look with indulgent eyes on Maxwell Egerton?

A stir at the back of the hall made Miss Vandelia glance sharply over her shoulder in impatience of the disturbance. Then an expression of astonishment, if not of actual consternation, spread over her countenance. She half started up from her chair, then as suddenly sat down again.

Borrowdean looked curiously toward the back of the hall, but he could see nothing terrifying, though there was indeed something a little unusual, in the appearance of the two late comers. To begin with, both were obviously Hindus. The younger, a man in the early thirties, was dressed in correct European attire, silk hat, frock coat, and properly subdued tie; yet the very contrast of his Western garb with the black hair and eyes and brown face of the East Indian made him a striking figure. His companion, a majestic old man, with white flowing beard, wore full native costume, turban and loose robe.

The two Hindus walked to seats in the center of

the hall, carrying themselves with the dignified and assured bearing of princes. At once they became thoroughly, almost breathlessly, engrossed in the lecture.

Miss Egerton's attention began to wander from the old Yorkshire Castle to the two East Indians, whose presence appeared to cause her great disquiet. Borrowdean, on the contrary, commenced at last to feel a mild interest in the description of "Twin Turrets," mainly because of the extraordinary absorption evinced in it by the two stately Hindus.

While the lecturer was waiting for some stereopticon views to be projected on the screen, the tension of the two foreigners relaxed. The younger glanced about the hall in a calmly curious and even detached fashion, as though considering himself immeasurably superior to the handful of Britishers comprising the audience. Suddenly his arrogant gaze rested on Miss Egerton, who was in the act of bowing to Borrowdean whom she had just recognized. Instantly a change came over the Hindu's face; his eye kindled and he addressed his companion in a fierce, eager whisper. The old man followed his glance and Borrowdean did not like the expression of grim resolve that settled over his harsh features as he surveyed Miss Egerton who, becoming conscious that she was the object of the Hindus' scrutiny, straightened in her chair with an air that plainly spoke defiance and an equally firm resolve.

Borrowdean was wondering how on earth this

staid British spinster of excellent family could have incurred the enmity, for such it undoubtedly was, of these two men from the occult East, when the lights were switched off for the first picture. There was some trouble with the projecting lantern, and for two or three minutes the hall was in darkness. Borrowdean was startled by feeling a hand laid on his shoulder and hearing Miss Vandelia Egerton bid him, in an authoritative whisper, get up and accompany her outside as noiselessly as possible. They had just reached the main exit when the lights went on again. The two Hindus had risen from their seats and were making their way down the aisle with undignified haste.

Miss Egerton clutched Borrowdean's arm. "Get me a taxicab as quick as you can!"

Borrowdean, in a state of bewilderment, hailed a waiting taxicab before the commissionaire could blow his whistle. Miss Egerton literally leaped into the cab, with a fine disregard of the usual composure with which she moved.

"Get in too, Borrowdean! Tell him to drive at the top of his speed to Cockerill and Waddington's in Oxford Street."

Borrowdean obeyed, being accustomed, as all who knew Miss Egerton were, to her high-handed fashion of disposing of other people's time to suit her own pleasure. As the taxi shot forward, the two Hindus issued agitatedly from the lecture-hall. Borrowdean, as the cab with a bold contempt for the rights

and safety of others, plunged into that ceaseless stream of traffic which at certain hours makes the London streets fairly impassable, had a final glimpse of a distracted commissionaire trying vainly to secure a taxi in obedience to the impatient commands of the two East Indians.

Miss Vandelia's expression was positively triumphant. "We've beaten them! Drive faster, fellow!" speaking through the tube which she found by her side.

Borrowdean ventured a faint remonstrance. "My dear Miss Egerton, if he drives any faster, we shall all be haled into Bow Street Police Court for endangering the lives of the public."

"Don't try to be humorous, Borrowdean." Miss Vandelia sat on the extreme edge of the seat, leaning forward as though hoping to hasten the speed of the taxi by the very intensity of her impatience. "I tell you we haven't a moment to lose."

"Perhaps," suggested Borrowdean, "you will explain what sort of an enterprise this is we are embarking upon?"

"Borrowdean," in a severely rebuking tone, "you have an inordinate curiosity; I haven't the time now to gratify it. You must wait till we reach Cockerill and Waddington's. I trust this little trip is not inconveniencing you?"

"Oh, not at all." Borrowdean resignedly clasped his hands over his malacca walking-stick. At least, this little excursion was a break in the boredom of

social life. "I am entirely at your disposal, Miss Egerton."

She leaned suddenly from the window. "There is a taxicab following us! Offer that fellow any inducement—I don't care what—so that we out-distance it."

Borrowdean obediently spoke through the tube, and with such eloquence that presently the taxi, after having narrowly escaped running down several indignant "bobbies" who had endeavoured to check its speed in the interests of humanity, stopped with a jerk before the imposing building in Oxford Street which contained the offices of Messrs. Cockerill and Waddington, the London estate agents who make a specialty of letting and selling old houses of historic interest. Miss Egerton sprang from the cab unaided before Borrowdean could collect himself sufficiently to assist her. She precipitated herself into the waiting lift while he was making a leisurely descent from the taxi.

But this unconventional haste on the part of one who had always hitherto shown a rigid regard for the proprieties of etiquette was beginning to enthuse Borrowdean, most unemotional of men, and he gained her side in the lift with something approaching celerity. He was even conscious of a little thrill of expectation as the elevator shot upward.

The offices of Messrs. Cockerill and Waddington were on the third floor. Miss Egerton swept through the swinging doors into the inner office with a vehe-

mence that brought Mr. Waddington, a benevolent-featured elderly gentleman, in amazement to his feet.

"I'll take it, Mr. Waddington," she cried.

He blinked at her dazedly over his gold-rimmed spectacles. "I beg your pardon, madam?"

"Twin Turrets! Mr. Waddington. I have come to sign the lease. That is plain enough, isn't it?"

Mr. Waddington gave a little cough of embarrassment. "The—ah—fact is, Miss Egerton, since our little talk yesterday morning when I gave you the refusal of Twin Turrets for twenty-four hours, that—that other client whom you met here—"

"You mean that brown-faced, insolent Hindu who thinks he has only to express a desire and the keys of every Castle in England will be given up to him?"

Mr. Waddington's embarrassment grew. "I was referring to—ah—to Prince Kassim Bardai of India, Miss Egerton. He made a—a really magnificent offer this noon. We should have closed with his highness at once had you not requested us over the telephone to extend the refusal until you had opportunity to hear the lecture and judge for yourself of the historic merits of Twin Turrets as compared with other old Castles on our list. Of course, Miss Egerton, you have the refusal until this evening, but—as I said—the prince's offer is magnificent—really extraordinary."

"How much?" demanded Miss Egerton sharply.

"Four thousand guineas per annum for a lease of five years."

"A rather extraordinary offer indeed," interposed Borrowdean who, with his gloved hand resting on the back of a chair, stood listening in an attitude of courteous, if slightly bored, ease. "I shouldn't say the old place was worth it, Miss Egerton. Probably the drainage is bad."

"On the contrary, the drainage is excellent," defended Mr. Waddington. "It is the one modern thing in this wonderful old castle."

Miss Vandelia stiffened with decision. "Get out the papers, Mr. Waddington, and I will sign at once. I duplicate the offer of that Hindu, whatever he styles himself, though I tell you frankly I consider four thousand guineas an outrageous sum. I only pay it on principle to keep our old castles in the hands of the English—where they should be. It is bad enough to see the Americans taking possession of them—but an East Indian adventurer, never! Where are the papers, Mr. Waddington?"

"Here on the desk, Miss Egerton. If you will take this chair, please." From the agent's tone, one might infer that he was a little disappointed at losing a Hindu potentate as a client. "I think, Miss Egerton," he ventured, "it is hardly fair to term Prince Kassim Bardai an adventurer. He is a member of one of the reigning families of India."

Miss Egerton gave a grunt of disbelief. "They all are. It makes them popular in society. Haven't you a respectable pen in your offices, Mr. Waddington?"

The agent hastily procured another. "Perhaps this will suit you better, madam."

She accepted it with a curt nod. "It couldn't suit me less."

As she crossed the "t" in her surname with a bold, masculine dash, the swinging-doors flew open violently and the younger of the two Hindus sprang into the office. The old East Indian stalked after him.

Both stopped short; there was desperation, rage, menace on the countenance of the younger man and a sort of restrained ferocity on that of his companion as they stared at Miss Egerton, who, after giving them one glance of unalloyed triumph, blotted her signature and wiped the pen with a maddening precision.

The younger Hindu seemed unable to control himself and made a threatening movement toward her. Mr. Waddington turned white with alarm and stood inert. Borrowdean, his air of languid ease gone, stepped quickly before Miss Egerton and confronted the East Indian.

"Can I accommodate you in any way—Prince Kassim Bardai, I believe?" a sternness in his voice in place of its usual fashionable drawl.

The Hindu glared in speechless wrath at the Englishman, tall, broad-shouldered, one who might have been athletic if he had not chosen to be elegant. There was a light in Borrowdean's grey eyes that must have reminded Kassim Bardai of the calm

masterfulness of those British rulers of India. His features worked convulsively, but the hand which had sought the ever-ready dagger fell at his side. His companion addressed to him words of advice and rebuke in Hindustanee, and Kassim Bardai listened with respect and even awe to the solemn speech of the old man. The rage died from his face and his manner became more in accord with his quiet Western dress than had been his violence of a moment before. He removed his silk hat and bowed politely, if a little constrainedly, to Miss Egerton, who was still seated uncompromisingly erect at the desk, her hand upon the document she had signed.

“Madam, it is Chand Talsdad’s opinion that I owe you an apology.” Kassim Bardai spoke perfect English with just a hint of the liquid quality of the Burmese tongue. “We men of the East are of ardent temperament and we find it difficult to bear disappointment with equanimity. It has long been my wish to become the possessor of an old English castle and to make my residence there during several months of each year. Twin Turrets appeared to me highly desirable, but doubtless Messrs. Cockerill and Waddington have other old houses of equal desirability on their list. I regret, madam, that my disappointment should have caused me to forget the respect due an English lady and I beg that you will permit me to wish you full enjoyment of Twin Turrets.”

Kassim Bardai bowed gracefully. One felt under the courtesy of his words a striving for effect rather than sincerity. He had not needed to say that he spoke at the instigation of Chand Talsdad.

Miss Egerton rose with deliberation. She looked squarely into the handsome, swarthy face of Kassim Bardai.

"Thank you. I expect to enjoy Twin Turrets."

"I repeat, madam, I hope you may." Kassim Bardai's teeth gleamed.

CHAPTER II

THE VENTURE ASSUMES PROPORTIONS

MISS EGERTON surveyed Borrowdean across the table in the restaurant at the Carlton. "I suppose, Borrowdean, you think I have committed a great folly."

Borrowdean eyed the hot buttered crumpet on his plate. "Well rather! Miss Egerton. I don't believe any old broken-down castle is worth such a rent as four thousand guineas per annum. There are other old castles in England that you could lease for much less. Why were you so determined to have this one?"

"Apart from its historic interest there are two reasons. One is that I will permit no East Indian adventurer to get the better of me, and the other is that Twin Turrets is situated near Eversleigh Court."

Borrowdean smiled comprehendingly. "And Eloise Eversleigh, the girl whom you would like to have Max marry, lives at Eversleigh Court."

"Precisely. It is time that Max married and settled down. He is thirty-three years old and yet he has no more serious object in life than horses and flirtations. But"—Miss Egerton's voice soft-

ened as it always did when she spoke of her nephew—"Max is good-hearted and a true Egerton in spite of his irresponsibility which, after all, is only the boyishness of one who will never grow old. Max needs nothing more than the steady influence of a sensible, clear-sighted wife—not a society doll. Eloise Eversleigh is just the girl to supply that influence."

Borrowdean ventured a question. "Does Miss Eversleigh happen to love Max?"

Miss Egerton looked slightly nettled. "They have only met twice—but I intend to remedy that. Did you ever know a woman with whom Max did not find favour?"

Borrowdean winced a little. "No; I don't believe I ever did." His tone was somewhat regretful. He was thinking of a certain woman.—"Do you know," he asked abruptly, "if Max feels any—ah—interest in Miss Eversleigh?"

Miss Egerton frowned. "You know perfectly well, Borrowdean, that at the present moment Max considers himself in love with Lady Berenice Coningsby. But it is nothing more than infatuation—senseless infatuation—a few weeks absence and he will forget her completely."

Borrowdean did not share Miss Egerton's hopefulness. He appreciated better than she did the charms of Lady Berenice.

"It is my intention to have Max spend the summer with me at Twin Turrets," resumed Miss

Egerton. "I tell you frankly, Borrowdean, I shall throw him and Eloise Eversleigh together as much as possible. But I suppose, to begin with, I must have some less obvious purpose in bringing Max to Twin Turrets, or I shall rouse that masculine obstinacy which all you men possess. A small house party would probably please him. You know his friends better than I, and I am going to do a rather unconventional thing and leave the selection of the guests to you. You may invite anyone you please—*except* Lady Berenice Coningsby."

"But, Miss Egerton, I think Berenice is the very one Max would want the most."

Miss Egerton's mouth tightened. "You call her Berenice?"

Borrowdean flushed. "Why yes; we're old pals—Berenice and I—have been for years."

Miss Egerton settled back severely in her chair. "Well, you need not invite her to Twin Turrets. As I said, I wish Max to forget her. She is distinctly *not* the woman whom I could accept as his wife."

"Oh, come now, Miss Egerton, what have you against Berenice? She's a jolly good sort—a fine woman."

"That is just it, Borrowdean. I do not approve of women who are 'a jolly good sort'; and, in the first place she is a divorcée."

"Her husband was a beastly cad!"

"*But* her husband," in an uncompromising tone.

“ Nobody forced her to marry him. It was her own choice and her plain duty was to abide by it. ‘Whom God hath—’ ”

Borrowdean raised his hand in deprecation. “ For Heaven’s sake don’t quote scripture in defense of a little beast like Greville Coningsby. Berenice ought to have divorced him years before she did. Miss Egerton,” suddenly lowering his voice, “ is not that his Hindu Highness just entering? ”

Miss Egerton eagerly followed Borrowdean’s glance. It was indeed Prince Kassim Bardai who was entering. He was accompanied this time not by the old man, Chand Talsdad, but by a young girl. The latter, herself a Hindu, was slim and childlike in appearance, apparently not more than sixteen years of age. She had a delicate oval face, clear olive skin, and velvety dark eyes in which gloomed the mystery of the East. A gown of white, simple but costly, set off her Oriental beauty and added to her air of extreme youth.

The lights, the music, the many people in the café seemed to frighten her and she shrank behind Kassim Bardai’s imposing figure as a deferential maitre d’hotel conducted them to a table not far from that at which Miss Egerton and Borrowdean were sitting. The girl kept her eyes timidly lowered, but Kassim Bardai’s calmly arrogant gaze, sweeping about the restaurant, soon settled on Miss Egerton. If he felt surprise, none at least was visible on his impassive countenance as, taking the privilege of a

prince, he bowed to her with a grave, though somewhat elaborate courtesy, which savoured slightly of the East. Chand Talsdad's rebuke had taken root, and whatever passion of resentment Kassim Bardai might still cherish against the successful lessee of Twin Turrets was concealed under a bearing of conventional composure, no less correct than that of any well-bred Englishman.

Miss Egerton inclined her head stiffly in response. Kassim Bardai, for the first time since entering the café, addressed his companion. He spoke to her earnestly, in an undertone, and evidently in Hindustanee. There was little doubt that Miss Egerton was the subject of the conversation and still less that the girl stood in abject fear of her escort and was both distressed and horrified by his words. She glanced across at Miss Egerton, her eyes filled now with pathetic appeal, touchingly childish. She appeared to be struggling with a desire to escape from Kassim Bardai and yet to lack the courage even to raise her voice in protest.

Miss Egerton was moved by the girl's obvious distress. "Borrowdean, I should like to go over and rescue that poor child from that Hindu adventurer, but I suppose it wouldn't do."

Borrowdean shook his head regretfully. "No; I don't believe it would. He evidently has some authority over her. Miss Egerton," leaning toward her over the table, "I have been thinking of Twin Turrets—where I have heard of it before. I remem-

ber now that it figured in the newspapers as the scene of a mysterious murder which has never been cleared up. The murdered man was the late owner—a collector of Hindu curios and the possessor of large shares in the ruby mines of Burma. If I were you, Miss Egerton, I should give up the lease of Twin Turrets. I don't like Kassim Bardai and I like that old greybeard even less."

"No!" Miss Egerton spoke with decision. "I shall not allow myself to be driven away from Twin Turrets either by a couple of East Indian mountebanks or by the ghost of a curio collector who ought to have known better than to dabble in anything Oriental. I am going back to Cavendish Square. I can't stand the misery in that poor child's eyes. Have you finished, Borrowdean?"

Borrowdean politely assured her that he had, but, as they rose, he could not resist a rueful glance at his scarcely touched cup of tea. Their sudden departure evoked the interest of Kassim Bardai, and Borrowdean, as he escorted Miss Egerton through the restaurant, was acutely conscious of the Hindu's intent gaze.

As Borrowdean handed her into a cab, she reminded him that she was leaving to him the selection of the guests for her house party.

"Not more than four including yourself," she cautioned him, "and you know whom you are *not* to invite. By the way, I wish you could find it convenient to call on me to-morrow. Why not come to luncheon? I expect Max then."

Borrowdean accepted her invitation and then re-entered the hotel intending to ask the reception clerk if Prince Kassim Bardai was registered there. As he was crossing the office, he heard his name called.

Turning, he saw a petite, very pretty young lady, dressed in the extreme of fashion, hastening toward him, one small gloved hand extended.

He stared a moment in amazement. "Why Ethie!" shaking hands with her somewhat confusedly, "what are you doing in London? I thought you were in Paris with the Nortons and their party."

The young lady made an affected little *moue*. "So I was, but I found Paris shockingly dull these last few days—Max was called back to London," she explained in a tone of confidence, the ingenuousness of which seemed slightly studied.

In fact, as one looked closely at Miss Ethelyn Roydon, her prettiness and even her youthfulness seemed slightly studied. The golden fluff of hair, straying from under the brim of her smart Paris hat, was of a little too bright, almost hard shade, the delicate pink and white of her complexion appeared to owe something to art, the arch of her brows was almost too perfect, her babylike mouth a bit over red.

Borrowdean surveyed her thoughtfully for a moment. "Ah! yes. I knew that Max had returned."

"I hear that he and Berenice coached to the

VENTURE ASSUMES PROPORTIONS 19

“races,” observed Ethelyn, striving to speak indifferently, but not altogether succeeding.

Borrowdean looked uncomfortable. He was sorry for Ethelyn, little Becky Sharp though he knew her to be. Max was treating her rather shabbily. True, they had never been formally engaged but, for a brief spell some three or four years previous, before Ethelyn's beauty had needed to borrow from art, Max had been no less devoted to her than he now was to Berenice. As a matter of fact, there had even been gossip; and then, Max's fickle fancy turning, he became no less assiduous in fleeing from Ethelyn than formerly he had been in running after her.

Borrowdean was aware that he must say something. “I believe Max did take several friends down to the races.”

Ethelyn moistened her lips. “Do you know where I could reach Max with a telephone or letter? His rooms are closed and the porter does not know when he will be back. He left Paris in such a hurry that he forgot to give me his address.” Her tone was successfully light, but her expression a little tremulous.

Borrowdean did not know what to say so he blundered into the truth, telling of Miss Egerton's renting of Twin Turrets and her intention to have Max pass the summer with her there.

“What a very peculiar woman Miss Egerton must be,” remarked Ethelyn reflectively, “to leave the

selection of her guests to you. Have you invited any one as yet?"

"Not as yet." His manner was guarded. He knew instinctively what was coming.

Ethelyn laid her little gloved hand appealingly on his arm. "Reggie, couldn't you—couldn't you invite me for one of the guests? I'd so love to pass a few weeks in Yorkshire. I dote on old castles."

Borrowdean felt utterly helpless. He knew what Ethelyn's persistency was and that she was almost always successful in securing desired invitations. In fact, extended visits at the houses of acquaintances, casual or otherwise, was Miss Roydon's favorite method of eking out the very slender annuity which was all that her father had managed to save for her out of an extensive patrimony which he had dissipated in the three popular pursuits of pleasure-living gentlemen.

"I don't know what to say Ethie," Borrowdean stammered in desperation, "you don't even know Miss Egerton."

"But I should like to! Reggie," Ethelyn's voice became very plaintive, "I'm fairly down to my last penny. If you don't take pity on me, I shall be forced to spend the summer here in London and I am sure the heat will kill me. Really, Reggie, I'm half sick now."

Borrowdean's unhappiness grew. Max would never forgive him if he invited Ethelyn, and as for Miss Egerton, Ethelyn was another of her pet

aversions. He stole a glance at Ethie. She didn't look strong; there were circles under her eyes not due to art and a drawn expression about her mouth. London would be a beastly hole in the heat of summer.

Miss Roydon, seeing his hesitancy, pressed her plea. "I should be so grateful to you, Reggie."

He could hold out no longer. After all, Miss Egerton had named only one whom he was *not* to invite.

"Very well, Ethie," with what heartiness he could summon up, "you are to consider yourself invited to Twin Turrets. You'll enjoy it, I think. I'll let you know when Miss Egerton expects her house party."

He made his escape as quickly as possible from Miss Roydon and her rather gushing thanks, lest he be tempted to withdraw the invitation which he already regretted. As he stepped toward the mahogany counter in the office to make inquiries regarding Kassim Bardai, that gentleman himself entered from the direction of the restaurant and approached Borrowdean. The young Hindu girl was still with the prince, but she kept at a little distance, her eyes fixed anxiously on Borrowdean as Kassim Bardai addressed him.

"You will pardon me," the East Indian said, speaking in his correct, somewhat stilted English, "but I believe you are the gentleman who accompanied Miss Egerton this afternoon to the offices

of Messrs. Cockerill and Waddington in Oxford Street?"

Borrowdean screwed the monocle into his eye and stared curiously at the Hindu. "I did accompany Miss Egerton."

Kassim Bardai plainly resented the Englishman's stare. A dark flush mounted to his face, but he contrived to hold his voice even. "Perhaps then you can inform me if you think it likely that Miss Egerton could be prevailed upon to reconsider—that is, to surrender the lease of Twin Turrets. There are several reasons why I wish to rent this estate. I am prepared to make Messrs. Cockerill and Waddington an even larger offer."

Borrowdean continued to find his eye-glass useful. "You *are* jolly eager to get the keys of that battered old castle, Prince Kassim Bardai. Its fame must have penetrated to India. Might I ask," with an exasperating drawl, "which part of its history interests your highness most, the fifteenth century period when barons wore roses and battled for rival kings or," and Borrowdean's voice became suddenly crisp and stern, "a more recent period, say a year or so ago when the late owner of Twin Turrets, a gentleman who had many affiliations with your country was found mysteriously murdered? A Hindu dagger, I believe, was the death-dealing instrument." His voice had dropped again into a drawl and he readjusted the monocle for another scrutiny of Kassim Bardai's face.

There was a tigrish glint in the East Indian eyes and his upper lip curled, showing the gleam of his teeth. But, in an instant, as though in obedience to some will mightier than his own, he crushed all outer semblance of passion. Once more he presented the composed and assured bearing of a man of caste. For the first time Borrowdean, observing the marvellous self-control which he exercised, believed in the reality of his being a prince of India.

"I will answer your question," Kassim Bardai remarked, his tone perfectly modulated and even a little tolerant. "I am interested in the history of no period in the existence of Twin Turrets. As a matter of fact, I am interested only in the history of my own country of India, seat of the worship of supreme Brahma." The light of religious fervour, of exaltation illumined the features of Kassim Bardai as he spoke the name of the first of the Hindu triad.

Borrowdean felt amost a sense of awe. He glanced at the girl, standing a few paces distant. The mention of Brahma had set her to trembling and her olive cheeks were almost white. She was regarding the impassioned countenance of Kassim Bardai with an intensity of fear that was fairly heart-rending. Borrowdean's inherent hate of the Hindu revived.

Kassim Bardai again put restraint upon himself, seeming to resent the fact that even for a moment he had permitted an unbeliever to look into the soul of a worshipper of Brahma.

"No," he went on, clearly forcing himself to use a more conversational tone, "my interest in Twin Turrets is in no way connected with its historic merits—or demerits—either in the past or in the near present. As I told Miss Egerton in your presence, I find it desirable to spend a few months of each year in England and Twin Turrets exactly suits my purpose. In addition, I consider its location near the North Sea an extremely healthful one. The air there, they tell me, is very—what you English call bracing—and precisely what my sister, Princess Lona Bardai"—he indicated the young girl who was still regarding him with frightened, fascinated eyes—"is in need of. Her highness has a delicate constitution."

"It is a pity to deprive Princess Lona Bardai of the bracing North Sea air," observed Borrowdean dryly, "but Miss Egerton has signed the lease for Twin Turrets, and I assure you I am perfectly certain that nothing will induce her to give it up."

He had purposely spoken loudly and he heard the girl utter a little moan of despair. She was a pathetic figure—this little Hindu princess; but Borrowdean judged her ailments to be mental rather than bodily and wholly due to the thralldom of terror in which her self-styled brother held her.

Kassim Bardai preserved an emotionless countenance. "If Miss Egerton is determined to occupy Twin Turrets, that of course ends the matter. I have the honour to wish you good-evening."

CHAPTER III

MAX

BORROWDEAN stopped in at his club before going on to his rooms. He had learned from the reception clerk at the Carlton that Kassim Bardai was not registered at that hotel. It had occurred to him that some of the members of the club might be able to give information concerning the Hindu, for, if he really was, as he claimed to be, a prince of India, he could not be entirely unknown in London.

However, there was only one man at the club who had ever heard of Kassim Bardai. This man was Bellamy, traveller and journalist of international reputation. He assured Borrowdean that Kassim Bardai actually was a member of a royal house of India, but for some mysterious reason had been an exile from his native land for several years. Bellamy believed that his exile was due to the fact that the family of the Bardai had in some way brought upon themselves the wrath of Brahma and that the priests of the triple god had forbidden Prince Kassim to return to India until he had performed some act of vendetta which should appease Brahma.

"But," objected Borrowdean, "the old chap who travels around with Prince Kassim looks as I should

imagine a Hindu priest would look and why should a priest travel about with a man who has offended Brahma?"

Bellamy shrugged. "I don't know, unless to see that he doesn't get lukewarm in the vendetta act. I know very little of the priests of that land of mystery and poisoned daggers—in fact, for prudence's sake I have made it a point to remain ignorant—but this I do know: if I had incurred the enmity of any one even remotely connected with that three-headed idol I should put the ocean between that person and myself and in addition build me an impregnable fortress. The wrath of Brahma reaches far. I trust that you are not in the black books of Prince Kassim or his priestly *compagnon de voyage*."

Borrowdean leisurely helped himself to a glass of Vermouth. "If I am, I fancy an able-bodied Englishman should be a match for even a worshipper of Brahma."

Bellamy laughed. "You are insular in your confidence. Don't you know that with the Hindus able-bodiedness and courage count for nothing? With them it's a thrust in the dark; and the coroner's verdict—'persons unknown.'"

Borrowdean lighted a cigarette and leaned back comfortably in his chair. "Confoundedly interesting, Bellamy. You should lecture on Hindu vendettas."

"But I'm serious, old fellow. If you have

offended Prince Kassim or that other chap, take the advice of a friend—and hide!”

“I fancy hiding would bore me.” Borrowdean blew out a little cloud of cigarette smoke. “Do you happen to know if the wrath of Brahma rests also on the sister of Prince Kassim?”

Bellamy looked interested. “Didn’t know he had a sister. Has he?”

“So he says.” Borrowdean threw away his cigarette and stood up, preparatory to leaving. “If you should hear anything further in regard to vendettas and the wrath of Brahma, I should be grateful if you would pass on the information to me.”

Bellamy stared at him curiously. “Why do you take such an interest in Kassim Bardai?”

Borrowdean decided not to gratify his curiosity. Undoubtedly Miss Egerton would not wish her affairs discussed at a club.

“One must have some interest in life,” he answered guardedly. “Why not Kassim Bardai as well as another?”

Bellamy smiled without rancour. “Keep your own counsel by all means if you prefer, only”—and he lowered his voice to a dramatic tone—“be careful you don’t bring on yourself the curse of the Azra El Kab ruby!”

“Is that intended for a joke, Bellamy?”

“I don’t know whether it is or not. I don’t fancy Sir Robert Grainger thought so. You remember a year or more ago he was found dead in the library

of his castle with a Hindu dagger in his breast. There was a strip of parchment pasted on the wall above him and on it in red ink was printed the words: 'Per order the Azra El Kab ruby'—or some such rot. I don't remember the exact wording, but Grainger was dead right enough and there was poison on the blade of the dagger to make the thrust sure."

Borrowdean felt a slight shiver down his phlegmatic spine. "And this happened, Bellamy?"

"In Yorkshire at a place called Twin Turrets."

Borrowdean took up his hat and stick. "Sounds too deuced melodramatic to have happened in England." His tone was perfectly colourless. "Good-night, Bellamy."

Borrowdean's state of mind, however, was not as unemotional as his voice. He was determined to use every effort to induce Miss Egerton to give up the lease of Twin Turrets. The scene of a spectacular murder such as this was decidedly not the place for a respectable English lady to pass the summer. He felt indignant toward Messrs. Cockerill and Waddington for their silence in regard to the crime which had occurred in this Yorkshire Castle.

When Borrowdean entered his rooms he discovered that he had a visitor. His favourite easy-chair was drawn up before the electric-log fire—for the May night was cool—a chestnut head reclined against the cushions and a pair of graceful limbs clad in black

evening suit were stretched in indolent comfort upon a leather ottoman. The visitor did not trouble to alter his position in the slightest as Borrowdean crossed the room.

"Making myself at home you see, Reggie," he remarked in a lazy, rather musical voice.

Borrowdean caught in a cordial grip the slim, elegant hand held out to him. "Max, dear old boy, why haven't you been in to see me before this?"

Max laughed softly. "First evening I've had to myself, Reggie. I don't dare to cross London in broad daylight—too many duns at my heels—rotten nuisance those chaps."

Borrowdean stood looking down at his visitor with an indulgent smile. Maxwell Egerton, for all his thirty-three years, looked entirely boyish, merry, and irresponsible as he reclined there in careless grace. In his very attitude was conspicuous his distinguishing characteristic—a calm confidence, an almost insolent assurance in his own powers of attraction—a characteristic which antagonized most men but won most women against their better judgment. Then, too, Max was undeniably handsome with his wavy chestnut hair, blue eyes, and his clear-cut features. Yet there was something not entirely lovable about his face—the reckless, half-mocking light in his eyes perhaps, combined with the cynical, almost sneering curl of his lips. But Borrowdean, who regarded Max, his boyhood's playmate, with

the lenient affection which a man of his steadfast, slow-going nature would feel for a wayward younger brother, saw none of these defects in the smiling face, indolently upturned to his.

Though Borrowdean was only five years older than Max, he felt at least twenty years his senior, and his tone was almost paternal as he asked, "You backed the winner at the races, I hope?"

Max raised his hand in entreaty. "Don't speak of races, Reggie! I lost heavily on Gypsy Queen. Berenice lost, too. She's no end worried. She's up to her ears in debts and had staked everything on the mare. Now she's no means to meet her creditors. I'm in the same predicament myself, but fortunately I am able to take it philosophically. 'Pon my word, Reggie, after all it's jolly exciting dodging duns. You should try it to relieve that infernal boredom you suffer from."

Borrowdean drew up a chair near his guest and settled himself therein with a sigh of content. "Must be jolly wearisome for the creditors though. Think I had rather bore myself. Have a Corona, Max?" He pushed a box of cigars toward him.

Max selected one. "Thanks. Don't mind if I do. By the way, Reggie, what is this wild-goose scheme my revered Aunt has in her bonnet about leasing a crazy old castle in Yorkshire and dragging me up there to lay the ghost? I couldn't make much out of what she said over the telephone except that it was bound to be a beastly hole to pass the

summer in. What about it, old man? She seems to have constituted you master of ceremonies."

Borrowdean lighted his cigar with some eagerness. "It strikes me, Max, that it's bound to be a rather exciting place to pass the summer in." And he told of the Hindus' attempts to gain possession of Twin Turrets, the crime which had been enacted there, and Bellamy's revelations in regard to the younger East Indian.

When Borrowdean had finished, Max was no longer reclining in indolent ease. He was sitting up with animation and his interest was so great that he even declined a glass of the Chateau Yquem which Borrowdean's manservant had brought in on a tray.

"What did you say that Hindu chap's name was?" Max demanded eagerly.

"Kassim Bardai."

"By George! I know him then. I've met him at 'The Foreign Club' and other places. He's a genuine prince all right and I believe there was some talk about his being exiled from India because of some curse having fallen on the family. But that's not to the point; the main fact is that he's distinctly worth cultivating. Why, he's a modern Croesus, a walking treasury of bank-notes and jewels. You should see the huge ruby he flaunts at evening functions—a ball of red fire—biggest stone I ever saw. They say it once formed one of the eyes of a Hindu god and that Kassim can't go back to India until the ruby has done something or rather—I don't

know what. Reggie, do you happen to know where his highness is putting up?"

"Max," said Borrowdean gravely, "don't get mixed up with this Hindu. If you must have money at once, I am perfectly willing to lend you more—anything within reason. I don't fancy Kassim Bardai would be a patient creditor."

Max gave a laugh of exasperation. "What an old literal-head you are, Reggie! Do you imagine that I should apply for a loan to a mere social acquaintance—and a foreigner at that? No, old boy, I have less direct views than that. Kassim Bardai could—if he wished—give me a little inside information in regard to investments. I've long had a wistful eye on the ruby mines of Burma. You say he was confoundedly set on getting the lease of Twin Turrets and that Aunt Van wouldn't give it up. Well then, if he can't be the lessee, there's no reason why he shouldn't be a guest at the house party."

Borrowdean knocked the ash from his cigar with deliberation. "Before you invite Kassim Bardai to Twin Turrets, suppose you ask him where he and his ruby were when Sir Robert Grainger was stabbed to death with a poisoned dagger in the library of that very castle."

Max rose with an indifferent shrug. "Hang Sir Robert Grainger! That little question is up to Scotland Yard. It's not my concern nor yours either, Reggie. Well, I'm off to try my persuasive powers on Aunt Van. I suppose if I invited the

Hindu without her permission, she would turn him out of doors. But I think," with a confident laugh, "I can bring her around. If she proves too obstinate, I shall threaten to make myself an ogre to the fair Eloise. You see," with a twinkle in his eye, "I have surmised my respected aunt's little match-making plan. Oh, by the way, Reggie, have you invited any guests as yet?"

Borrowdean, in his sudden displeasure at Max's unreasonableness, decided to break the news without preamble.

"I have invited one—Ethelyn."

"The deuce you have!" Max's face hardened; the suggestion of a sneer about his mouth became pronounced. "Why the blazes did you do it, eh?"

Borrowdean told him.

Max gave a harsh laugh of irritation. "You're confoundedly soft! Oh, well," with a resigned shrug, "I suppose she would have tracked me down wherever I went."

At that moment Borrowdean felt something akin to contempt for Max. "You're treating Ethie rather shabbily."

"Then let her keep away from me." Max's tone was expressive of that indifference, nothing short of brutality, which men display toward the woman of whom they have tired. "Look here, old chap, why didn't you invite Berenice instead? Then," with a mocking smile, "you would have pleased yourself as well as me."

Borrowdean stiffened. Max had never before appeared to him in so unlovable a light.

"It was Miss Egerton's express wish that I should not invite Berenice."

Max burst into a shout of amused laughter. "By Jove! Reggie, I don't think the choice you have made will please Aunt Van much more than if you had shown a little daring and invited Berenice after all. I wonder if I could coax her into giving an invitation to Berenice as well as to Kassim Bardai. It would be a jolly entertaining house party then. So long, Reggie!"

Still laughing, Max went out.

CHAPTER IV

TWIN TURRETS

BORROWDEAN was awakened the next morning, unpleasantly early for a man of his easy habits, by the insistent ringing of the telephone. It was Miss Egerton calling. She desired to know if he could accompany her to Twin Turrets that very afternoon. Something had happened—she would explain on the train—which made her determined to take possession of the old house that night. She deemed it advisable for a man to accompany her—even a woman of her independent character was not averse to summoning a member of the dominant sex to her aid in a case of necessity—and as Max, because of a previous engagement which he thought could not be broken, was unable to play attendant squire, Borrowdean had occurred to her as being in every way a suitable escort.

Borrowdean, too, had a previous engagement for that evening, but he was too good-natured to refuse Miss Egerton's request, or rather demand; and so, after a vain attempt to induce her to give up the lease of Twin Turrets by a recital of Bellamy's colourful account of the crime that had taken place there and the apparent connection with it of some

malevolent Hindu association, he assured her that he would be at King's Cross Station in due time for the train which she desired to take to Yorkshire.

He was as good as his word and was leisurely pacing the platform, scanning the passing throng of travellers and tourists with his monocled gaze, when Miss Egerton's tall, austere figure made its way toward him. That venturesome lady was followed by an elderly, worried-looking maid, laden down with boxes and bags, and by an indifferent-appearing porter, also burdened with luggage.

"Glad to find you on time, Borrowdean," was Miss Egerton's characteristically curt greeting. "Evans," to the distracted maid, "don't let that morocco bag out of your hands for a moment. Borrowdean," as he was assisting her into a first class compartment, "what have you done with your luggage?"

"My man has charge of it."

"I hope," Miss Egerton paused on the carriage step, "you are not bringing anything of especial value?"

"Oh, no; I shouldn't say Twin Turrets was exactly a safe treasure-house."

Evans gave a little gasp and dropped the morocco bag.

"You are very clumsy to-day, Evans," said her mistress severely.

Evans hastily picked up the bag. "It's nerves, Miss Vandelia, that's what it is. And why shouldn't it be when we're heading straight into danger?"

Miss Egerton's whole attitude was expressive of disgust. "I am sorry, Evans, I showed you that note this morning, but I did not suppose a woman of your years would permit herself to be afflicted with nerves. Hand me the bag, Evans, before you drop it again."

As the train left the great city behind and plunged on through suburbs and woodlands and queer, dead-alive little villages on its way to the north, Borrowdean was shown the note which had upset the middle-aged nerves of Evans. Miss Egerton drew from a pocket of the morocco bag a square, white envelope on which the address, "Miss Vandelia Egerton,—Cavendish Square," was painstakingly printed in cramped characters. The postmark was "Kensington," and the date of posting the preceding evening.

"Read the enclosure, Borrowdean," bade Miss Egerton.

He took from the envelope a sheet of plain, white paper folded once. As he opened it, there was wafted to his nostrils the peculiar, subtle fragrance of some perfume which he had never smelled before, but which vaguely suggested to him strange, exotic blossoms, the storied lotus-flowers perhaps. Across the middle of the paper was printed in the same laborious, cramped characters as those upon the envelope: "For pity's sake, do not go to Twin Turrets. Danger is there."

"It was that note," declared Miss Egerton, sitting

very straight and stiff in her corner of the compartment, "which made me resolve to go this very night. I never allow myself to be deterred from a course of action by silly practical jokes."

Borrowdean refolded the paper and placed it carefully in the envelope which he gave back to Miss Egerton.

"You think it is no more than a practical joke then?"

"This is the twentieth century and a civilized country," she reminded him.

He nodded assent. But that faint, exotic perfume was still in his nostrils, strangely stirring his hitherto stolid British senses and conjuring up the vision of a plaintive olive face and a pair of soft, dark eyes, shy and troubled as those of a frightened fawn. Lona Bardai, poor little transplanted lotus-flower! Why should she not have sent this line of warning through terror of what her brother might do to the woman who had outwitted him in securing the lease of Twin Turrets?

Miss Egerton, however, refused to credit this belief. "If the note is more than a practical joke and was written by that poor shrinking child, then Kassim Bardai forced her to do so in the hope of frightening me away from Twin Turrets, but I am not to be frightened away as long as there is telegraph connection with Scotland Yard. It is unbelievable, Borrowdean, but Max actually begged me to invite that brown-faced adventurer to be my

guest this summer—it seems he met him at some club. Of course I refused. Max then behaved very foolishly, displayed a little of his mother's temper, and even declared he would not come to Twin Turrets. You understand how essential it is that he should come and so I finally consented to his bringing down two or three friends with him. He forestalled the proviso I was about to add by informing me that Lady Berenice Coningsby intended to spend the summer in Scotland."

Borrowdean thought that Berenice must have changed her mind very suddenly for she had told him only the day before that she had declined Lady MacGowrie's invitation because Lord MacGowrie persisted in making love to her, but he wisely said nothing. He could not, however, help wondering if Max, the incorrigible, had some daring plan in his head. He had always taken liberties with Miss Vandelia which no one else in the family would have ventured upon, and yet had contrived to keep the lion's share of her favour by a successful blending of audacity, whimsicality, and boyish charm of manner.

Borrowdean became aware that Miss Egerton's grey eyes were fixed upon him rather sharply.

"I was sorry," she remarked, "to learn that you had invited Miss Roydon to Twin Turrets. From what I have heard of her I judge she is not a guest whom I should have chosen. Her father was impossible and she appears to have no established position."

"Her father was a rotter right enough, but Ethie herself—why she's just a forlorn little creature, rather a pitiful little soul when all is said and done. She's always been buffeted about from pillar to post and has had to fight for whatever she got. Her mother was never known to speak a kind word to her and her father tolerated her and that's all. I doubt if she ever had a real friend in her life."

Miss Egerton's expression became slightly less severe. Her heart was kinder than she herself would admit. "Well, I daresay Miss Roydon will know how to make herself agreeable. You understand, Borrowdean, I shall expect you to look after her. Max must be left free. Now there is another little matter. I received a communication from Cockerill and Waddington this morning which did not please me. I think they are not treating me quite fairly. Those Hindus have unquestionably offered them a still larger sum for Twin Turrets and they are adding all manner of conditions and stipulations, hoping of course to annoy me sufficiently to make me give up the lease. But they don't know me. I have signed that lease and shall hold to it. Moreover, I admit I have a certain amount of woman's curiosity and am determined to find out why these Hindus are so desperately anxious to rent Twin Turrets. You are always complaining of being bored, Borrowdean; it might amuse you to turn detective and help me solve this mystery."

"By Jove! it might." He looked mildly excited.

"What were Cockerill and Waddington's conditions, Miss Egerton?"

"That the woman who acted as housekeeper for Sir Robert Grainger, the late owner, and the man who was butler should remain in the same capacities. It seems they have been caretakers of the estate since Sir Robert's—death. The man is a Hindu."

"And the woman?"

"She came originally from Australia, I believe."

Borrowdean passed his hand thoughtfully down the smooth back of his head. "An interesting pair! I shouldn't wonder, Miss Egerton, if we found more or less excitement at Twin Turrets."

"I am prepared for it!" grimly. "I have Max's revolver in this bag."

Borrowdean smiled ever so slightly. The notion of Miss Vandelia Egerton levelling a revolver at some housebreaker was not entirely lacking in humour.

"I believe," with a suggestion of a twinkle in the calm depths of his grey-blue eyes, "that Pearson thought it advisable to pack my revolver. I fancy we should be a match for the butler and the housekeeper—or even Kassim Bardai himself. Our first glimpse of the Yorkshire moors, Miss Egerton." He pointed to the huge expanses of moorland, flaming with the gold of the gorse and the broom, which now, as the train laboured up the steep gradients northward, were replacing the farmlands, the wooded valleys, and the green fields.

Miss Egerton looked with interest on the rugged Yorkshire scenery—the lofty shoulders of the moors, the precipitous ravines gorged out between fortress-like scarps, again rolling masses of moorland, and beyond, as the train climbed ever higher, the sea, like a haze of pearly-blue, blending softly with the hard, rugged outline of the ling.

As the sun was commencing to sink, the train drew up at a small wayside station and Miss Egerton and Borrowdean descended. Standing there on the platform in the waning light, while the tail-lamps of the train lost themselves in the distance, the Londoners felt very much alone; the silence of the countryside seemed oppressive and even formidable. Evans shivered and drew close to her mistress.

A moment later a wagonette with a pair of cobs swung into view. The coachman, a hard-featured, thick-set fellow in a nondescript blue livery, saluted Miss Egerton with respect, not untinged with curiosity, as he drew up at the edge of the platform. Miss Egerton and Borrowdean took the two side seats, facing each other, Evans crowded in beside her mistress, and Pearson, Borrowdean's valet, climbed to a seat beside the coachman. A flourish of the whip and the cobs started off at a smart pace along a wide roadway, bordered by strips of grass and indented on the left by a large pond which reflected the pale pink of the evening sky. Some ancient barns, a flock or two of geese, and a few whitewashed gables stood out against the deepening

tones of the landscape, while beyond rose ever steeply the majestic shoulders of the moors, now merging into gloom. There was something soul-stirring, awesome in the silence, the vastness of the moor spaces. It seemed almost a desecration to break the brooding quiet, and so the travellers rode on, without speaking, over the bare ribs of the hills where the heather, not yet awakened, slumbered snugly in its coat of chocolate-brown.

The wagonette turned into a side road and curved upwards to towering heights whence swept down a cold, cutting wind that set the Londoners shivering. It needed but this chilling blast to complete the grim suggestiveness of the bleak waste, the darkling sky, and the mystery of that old castle toward which they were hastening. Evans sat huddled against her mistress in a misery of loneliness and homesickness. Miss Egerton herself was strangely subdued. Borrowdean wondered if she was beginning to regret her venture.

As the wagonette still pressed upward, the wind grew keener, whipping their faces with the sting of salty brine, the air became filled with the ceaseless thunder of the heavy waves of the North Sea, and beyond the bold headlands, shrouded in dusk, which reared themselves to the west, glimmered the harbour lights of Whitby.

Suddenly there rose before the travellers the ridge of a lofty promontory; on its crest, lashed by the winds of the North Sea, clustered a dark mass of

buildings, which sent up into the evening sky two high, narrow towers. The driver pointed with his whip.

“Twin Turrets!”

Miss Egerton, with the spirit of adventure shining in her eyes, stared up eagerly at those two ancient, crenelated towers. Evans regarded them with a sort of fascinated fear and pushed closer to her mistress. Borrowdean, too, his imagination excited by the long ride through the desolate grandeur of the darkling moors, felt that there was something almost sinister in the aspect of those twin relics of a bygone age, outlined with peculiar distinctness against the twilight glow. For centuries they had stood thus like sentinels, frowning down on stretches of sea and moor, grim guardians of the old house which, only a few short months ago, had been the scene of violent and unexplained death. Perhaps were those two hoary turrets but endowed with the power of speech, they might have told what dark link it was which united this old Yorkshire castle to distant India—a link not severed by the mysterious death of its late owner, since the brown-skinned men of that occult land sought still to gain a foothold here.

It seemed that the old house meant to offer but a sullen welcome to its new mistress, for its windows gave back darkness to the dark. Gaunt and silent and stern, under the desolation and terror of its solitude, it clung to the naked back of the promon-

tory. On near approach the house showed itself to be composed of a central block of black granite, above which rose the twin turrets, battlemented and pierced with many loopholes, and from which, on the right and left, stretched more modern wings, outspread like arms, as though to make more secure the apparently perilous position of the old castle perched on the ridge of the promontory. The whole pile was singularly bare of ivy for so venerable a structure, and this fact accentuated its gaunt and forbidding aspect.

As the wagonette passed through a turreted gateway, one of the heavy mullioned windows in the central block suddenly showed forth a golden oblong, bordered with shadowy grey where the lamp-light thinned the black of the wall. There was life then in that grave-like house; some one had been watching for the coming of the wagonette. A moment later the massive entrance door swung open and a strange, fantastic figure was silhouetted against the yellow light of the hall. It was the Hindu butler in native garb. He stepped out into the night, making a graceful and dignified salaam.

"Welcome, Mem Sahib!" His voice had the same liquid quality as that of Kassim Bardai.

He opened the door of the wagonette and held out a lean, brown hand to assist Miss Egerton down. But she ignored that hand and descended unaided. Evans followed closely, her teeth chattering more from dread of the solemn-faced Hindu and that old

house, secret and silent, with its one lighted window than from the chill of the biting winds that swept straight from the sea, foaming at the foot of the promontory.

Deferentially the Hindu butler ushered Miss Egerton into the great hall, dim and sombre in the subdued light of the central lamp. Borrowdean followed her, carrying the morocco bag which she would no longer entrust to Evans, who was fairly treading on her mistress's heels in her determination not to be left alone and unprotected. Borrowdean's customary boredom had long since vanished and, as the outer door clanged heavily behind Pearson who was the last to enter, he felt extraordinarily wide-awake and ready to encounter the mysteries of the old house which the very atmosphere of the hall seemed to suggest. Long shadows trailed down from the age-blackened oak rafters, dimming the richly carved pattern of the wainscoting which reached to the high ceiling, and blurring into a vague purplish grey the various tints in the stone-flagged pavement. Two noble staircases, curving upward on either side of the hall, lost themselves in obscurity and even the splendid old fireplace showed but indistinctly.

Borrowdean, as his eyes became accustomed to the dusk, looked about vainly for the stags' heads and the armoured figures that usually adorn the halls of well-ordered old English houses. In place of these traditional relics, Hindu curios of every description

were ranged about the oaken walls and the gloom lent them grotesque shapes. The hideous faces of idols grinned with unseemly mirth, and one in particular, a monstrous statue of three-headed Brahma, standing forth from a dim recess, seemed to mock and threaten.

Miss Egerton turned sharply from a scrutiny of those three leering idiot faces to meet the mildly questioning gaze of the Hindu butler, who was standing by her side in an attitude of respectful attention.

"What is your name?" she demanded curtly.

"Ahmed, Mem Sahib," with another deep salaam.

Miss Egerton jerked her shoulders impatiently. Her English straightforwardness revolted at the grovelling obsequiousness of the East.

"Have no preparations been made for our arrival? Why is Mrs. Dalrymple not here to receive us?"

The shadow of some emotion, quickly suppressed, flickered for an instant over Ahmed's inscrutable brown face.

"I will call Dalrymple Sahiba," he said in his liquid, deliberate voice.

With slow dignity he advanced to the staircase on the left. As a matter of fact, he appeared to go with a purposeful slowness and at every step he seemed to be listening for something.

"Pull yourself together, Evans!"

Miss Egerton gave her elderly maid a reproving shake. The latter was staring with fascinated

horror at the triple-headed Brahma. Borrowdean's man, on the contrary, had preserved the detached imperturbability of the well-trained British servant and apparently was supremely unconscious of such very untraditional—in the sense that they were unEnglish—objects as the leering images of foreign gods.

Before Ahmed could mount the stairs, a figure grew out of the darkness above: a woman's figure, dressed in black.

Ahmed turned quickly. "Dalrymple Sahiba is here to give welcome, Mem Sahib."

Again there was the momentary flicker of some emotion on the face of the East Indian.

CHAPTER V

THE FIGURE ON THE TERRACE

MRS. DALRYMPLE descended the stairs with nervous haste and moved toward the centre of the hall where Miss Egerton awaited her in a silence which plainly spoke rebuke. As the housekeeper came into the small circle of lamplight, her face was illumined clearly; it was the face of a woman who had known mental suffering—and who still suffered.

She was of rather an unusual type, not beautiful, yet striking, with her heavy masses of bronze hair, her large, tragic eyes of the same colour, and her singularly white complexion. She was of medium height, admirably developed, with slightly voluptuous lines. In age she might have been anywhere in the vicinity of thirty-five.

There was a stereotyped smile of welcome on her lips, but in her eyes fear—indubitable, anxious fear. She looked a little doubtfully at Miss Egerton's uncompromising countenance, read the disapproval there, and her smile grew somewhat tremulous.

"I am Morna Dalrymple," she said, in a low and musical voice which had in it a note of sadness. "I am sorry not to have been on hand to receive you, but there were some little housekeeping duties

which I had not quite finished—you see, the only servants at present are Ahmed and one maid, so there was much I had to do myself. Cockerill and Waddington's telegram was—was rather sudden."

The severity of Miss Egerton's expression did not relax. "I instructed Cockerill and Waddington to tell you that I should not expect many preparations to be made for our reception on so short a notice. But nevertheless it seems to me that a few lights in the windows would not have put you to too much trouble and would certainly have given a more cheerful aspect to the house than absolute darkness."

Morna Dalrymple bit her lip and flashed a peculiar glance at Ahmed, who was watching her intently, as though waiting for instructions. Perhaps he read some unspoken wish in her glance, for suddenly he turned and crossing the hall, sped up the stairway on the right with a sort of panther-like swiftness.

"I hope you will pardon the absence of lights," Mrs. Dalrymple was saying in her soft voice. "I told Essy Grieve to put lamps in several of the windows, but she evidently forgot to do so. Probably," there was a hint of nervous tension in her manner, "you will wish to go to your rooms before having dinner."

In answer to her call of "Essy!" a buxom young country lass, clear-eyed and rosy-cheeked, appeared from somewhere at the back of the hall, bearing a lamp which Mrs. Dalrymple took from her hand.

"The maid at least is wholesome-looking," Miss

Egerton remarked in an undertone to Borrowdean as they followed the housekeeper up the stairway on the left. The two staircases mounted and merged into a square balustraded gallery, from which two long corridors branched off on each side. The chambers opened off these corridors. Borrowdean's was in the same wing as Miss Egerton's and only three doors from it. The room was gloomy, as he had expected to find it, and when Pearson threw back the window sashes to dispel the musty odor that pervaded the chamber, the thunder of the North Sea fell on their ears and a sharp, penetrating wind swirled through the apartment, billowing the old tapestries and snuffing out the candles which Essy had just lighted.

Borrowdean hastily closed the sashes and sent Pearson for a lamp. A few minutes later he joined Miss Egerton in the dining-room which opened out of the hall. This apartment, long, low-ceilinged and heavily paneled in dark oak, was no less sombre than the rest of the house and there was something unpleasantly incongruous in the contrast between the fine old monogramed silver and the prim line of portraits on the walls—both so essentially English—with the Oriental curios and idols that stood about the room. Ahmed alone in his exotic garb seemed to fit in with the ever-present suggestion of the East—Ahmed with his peculiar, liquid voice, his impassive features, his observant eyes, and his catlike tread. He was perfectly trained, this Hindu butler,

deft in serving, attentive to every want, and yet Borrowdean had the uncomfortable sensation of being near some secret menace every time the brown man approached him.

To divert his mind from this obsession, he began to study the stiff old portraits of the past occupants of Twin Turrets. One in particular held his gaze; time had effaced but little of the brightness of its colouring and the swaggering, beribboned cavalier of the days of the Second Charles laughed down at him with reckless, insolent eyes. Vivid as though fresh from the painter's brush, gleamed the red of the gay roysterer's brocaded suit; equally brilliant was the scarlet of the sweeping plumes that adorned the broad-brimmed hat. In fact, this Carolean rake stood forth like a single splotch of brightness against the surrounding gloom. But Borrowdean, who was strangely fanciful that night, took an instinctive dislike to the flaunting picture; it seemed to him more a thing of evil than the grinning Indian idols.

At this juncture the rigidity of Ahmed's attitude drew his attention. The Hindu, too, was staring up at the Red Cavalier, and his face was no longer impassive—it was filled with hate. Hate of a man dead these two hundred years? Borrowdean lifted the black ribbon of his monocle and, screwing the glass into his eye, gazed curiously at the Hindu.

Ahmed became at once conscious of his scrutiny. Instantly he lowered his eyes from the portrait and his countenance was again inscrutable. He raised

the silver cover from a dish which Essy had just placed upon the table.

"I may serve you to rabbit pasty, Sahib?" Ahmed's tone was respectful and properly subdued.

But Borrowdean partook of the rabbit pasty with indifferent relish, and he was not sorry when the meal had ended and it was permissible to withdraw from the presence of Ahmed.

Miss Egerton, too, had not appeared thoroughly to enjoy the dinner.

"They're both uncanny—the butler and the housekeeper," she confided to Borrowdean as she led the way into the hall. "Mrs. Dalrymple looks to me like a woman who has a past she doesn't know how to get rid of and a present she doesn't know how to manage."

Evans, the picture of disconsolate misery, was awaiting her mistress in the centre of the hall, that being the farthest point from the idols which terrified her.

"I couldn't stay in that room alone another minute, Miss Vandelia! I could see images in every corner."

"Ridiculous!" said Miss Egerton unsympathetically. She plainly felt a desire to shake some courage and a little common sense into Evans.

Mrs. Dalrymple at that moment was gliding through the hall with a step almost as noiseless as Ahmed's. Miss Egerton called to her peremptorily and asked her to show them over the house before it grew later.

"At the same time," she added, "I can see that everything is properly locked up."

Morna Dalrymple's features stiffened. "That will hardly be necessary, Miss Egerton. I have always had charge of the locking up."

"Henceforth I will relieve you of that duty."

A flush suffused Mrs. Dalrymple's very white skin. "Sir Robert Grainger was content to entrust the locking up to me."

Miss Egerton stood her ground. "Sir Robert Grainger, Mrs. Dalrymple, met with violent death in this house."

Morna Dalrymple quivered as though she had been struck. Her sudden colour fled and for a moment she presented the appearance of some hunted creature. Then, realizing that Miss Egerton was scrutinizing her with cold suspicion, she contrived to recover her poise.

"Of course," she said quite humbly, "if you prefer to see for yourself that everything is properly locked up, I can have no objection. I only wished to relieve you of what seemed to me an unnecessary responsibility." She called Essy to bring a lamp.

Miss Egerton turned to her maid, who was staring at Mrs. Dalrymple with much the same terrified gaze as that which she bestowed on the idols.

"I suppose you will want to come with me, Evans?"

"Oh yes, Miss Vandelia." Evans showed immense relief at finding she was not to be left alone. "And—and won't his lordship come too."

"Really, Evans, you are behaving very foolishly. I presume Lord Borrowdean will wish to see the house."

Borrowdean stepped forward. "Delighted, I'm sure."

He, too, was looking fixedly at Mrs. Dalrymple whose extreme pallor was accentuated by the recent storm of emotion that had agitated her. Decidedly the housekeeper of Twin Turrets was an interesting study.

A lamp having now been brought by Essy, Mrs. Dalrymple conducted Miss Egerton, with Evans again treading on her heels, and Borrowdean following leisurely, from one end of Twin Turrets to the other. She led them through a large drawing-room and a smaller one, on to the modern billiard-room, and thence into a magnificent ballroom of immense size. Evans slipped on the highly polished floor and fell in an ungraceful heap. Borrowdean gravely assisted her to her feet, but Miss Egerton, yielding to the desire that had possessed her the entire evening, gave Evans a vigorous shaking, which made her so indignant that she forgot to whimper and tremble at every shadow as they passed through a long gallery into a splendid library, vaguely illuminated by a few wax tapers in a candelabra pendent from the vaulted ceiling. Here again Hindu curios confronted them on every side.

The light of the lamp which Mrs. Dalrymple carried flashed back in streaks of fire from the eerie

collection of curious-shaped daggers, glittering on the dark oak wainscoting. Sir Robert Grainger had shown strange taste in the adorning of his castle. Borrowdean recollected that it was in this very room Sir Robert had met his death.

But Miss Egerton apparently had no thought, then, of the late occupant of Twin Turrets. As she passed from room to room, her appreciation of the old house grew. The passion of the antiquarian was in her eyes as she looked at the beautiful old brocades and embroideries on the furniture, the ancient oak-panellings, the rare china, and the priceless old tapestries. The sinister suggestion of India which everywhere protruded itself, she seemed resolved to ignore. Here in the library, with its mullioned windows, its oaken wainscoting, and its rows of bookshelves, all so characteristically English, it was comparatively easy to banish the thought of that land of mystery, for the idols standing about were almost swallowed up by the shadows in the vast room, and the daggers on the walls, now that Mrs. Dalrymple had moved her lamp to the middle of the apartment, no longer streaked the wainscoting with darts of fire.

The sashes of one of the deep-set windows were slightly thrown back and through it sounded the roar of the sea. A double door of leaded glass cut in the centre of the north wall, between the rows of bookshelves, looked out upon a stone terrace. Miss Egerton advanced to this door to make sure that it

was secure. At the same time she directed Mrs. Dalrymple to close the window and extinguish the candles. Borrowdean drew the window to, while the housekeeper, reaching up on tiptoe, blew out the tapers.

Miss Egerton turned to rebuke Evans who was trying to prevent her from approaching the door; evidently the maid was under the impression that her mistress intended to walk out upon the terrace. Suddenly Mrs. Dalrymple's lamp was extinguished. Borrowdean, although he had not been watching her at that moment, would have been willing to swear that she had blown it out purposely. The library was instantly flooded with darkness. Evans uttered a piercing shriek.

"Look there at the door, Miss Vandelia!"

The sudden change threw the door into relief—a long rectangle of greyish light—and showed a figure standing close, peering in. Before one could hardly visualize it, the figure darted across the terrace and vanished in the night.

CHAPTER VI

THE BROKEN IDOLS

EVANS began to moan and cry from nervous fear. Miss Egerton shook her again, but without the desired effect.

"Give me the key to this door, Mrs. Dalrymple," bade Borrowdean crisply.

"I—I haven't that key."

"Why not?" demanded Miss Egerton belligerently. "You have every other key with you, have you not?"

"That key is—lost I think; at any rate, mislaid." Mrs. Dalrymple was plainly agitated.

Borrowdean felt his way, with numerous collisions, to the hall. "I am going outside, Miss Egerton, to discover, if I can, who that was looking in at the door."

Evans raised a scream of protest. "Don't let his lordship go and leave us alone in the dark! That man might get in somehow and murder us all."

"Be quiet, Evans." But Miss Egerton's own voice was almost shrill in the stress of her excitement. "It was only a woman—didn't you see the feathers on her hat? I wish you would go, Borrowdean."

"It was a man," insisted Evans hysterically, "a man dressed very queer."

As Borrowdean hurried along the gallery into the entrance hall, he heard Miss Egerton saying, "Don't be absurd, Evans! Men don't wear feathers in their hats. Are there any matches in this room, Mrs. Dalrymple, or have they too been mislaid?"

Borrowdean, however, thought as Evans did that the person who had looked in at the door was a man. It was ridiculous, of course, but the transient impression he had gained of that shadowy figure which certainly had worn a hat with feathers brought to his mind the picture in the dining-room at which Ahmed had stared with eyes of hate—the flaunting picture of the Red Cavalier.

In the great hall Ahmed was busying himself lighting candles and he showed mild amazement—and a hint of some other emotion—when Borrowdean bade him undo the outer door. This usually deft servitor proved singularly clumsy in obeying, and when at length the massive door swung open, Borrowdean felt sure that the person in the feathered hat—whether man or woman—had by now put distance between himself and Twin Turrets.

As Borrowdean stepped out into the night, the wind, tearing like a tornado across the bare promontory, almost took away his breath, and the booming of the sea below was fairly deafening. The stars were creeping into the cloud-swept sky and by their light he made the entire circuit of the house, but

found no trace of any person lurking about. Through the library door opening on to the stone terrace, he saw that one could gain a comprehensive view of the whole apartment. In fact, he stood for a few moments looking through the leaded panes, studying with interest the rather tragic face of Morna Dalrymple. The wax tapers had been relighted and, as Mrs. Dalrymple was standing directly under the candelabra, talking with Miss Egerton and evidently trying to conciliate her, he had opportunity for a prolonged scrutiny of the woman who had served as housekeeper to the late tenant of Twin Turrets, mysteriously slain in that very room not more than a year ago.

Her personality seemed to him baffling and consequently repellant. Women of this type had no attraction for him and, when in their presence, he was always conscious of a desire to escape. Being of a frank and open nature, he hated mystery; and, too, being also of an indolent temperament, the effort of trying to understand such women wearied and finally bored him. But in the case of Morna Dalrymple there appeared to be necessity for trying to understand her. Her smooth manner very likely concealed hostility and certainly her agitation at mention of Sir Robert Grainger's death would hardly prejudice one in her favour. She began now to move about the library, pushing chairs into place and giving little housewifely touches here and there. Borrowdean was forced to admit that there was

grace in her every movement, but to him it was a snake-like grace, and the curious contrast of her bronze-coloured hair and eyes with her very white skin which would have aroused enthusiasm in an artist struck him as uncanny.

At that moment Evans caught sight of him peering in. Mistaking him for that other who had so alarmed her, she gave vent to another scream. Borrowdean decided to go in and reassure her. Moreover it was beastly cold outside. The densest of London fogs was cheerfulness itself in comparison with the bleakness of this house on the North Sea.

Upon reëntering, he found that Miss Egerton had recovered her equanimity to the extent of being able to discuss with Mrs. Dalrymple the engaging of additional servants. The housekeeper did not show undue joy at the prospect of an invasion of new servants. As a matter of fact, she seemed to be endeavouring to conceal her unwillingness to receive them, although her own duties would thereby be greatly lightened. The mention of the arrival of guests on the morrow even caused her to exhibit dismay. But why should it? Guests would enliven the gloom of the old house and surely Morna Dalrymple was not the type of woman who would be content to bury herself indefinitely in lonely monotony.

Borrowdean found himself longing for the sound of Max's irresistible laugh. He wondered now how it was that he could have felt irritated with his friend

the night before. Max, he felt sure, was too chivalrous to treat Ethie cavalierly unless she fairly drove him to do so by her importunities. Well, he would try to amuse Ethie while she was at Twin Turrets and keep her away from Max. He owed that much to Miss Egerton and to Max since he had invited her against the wishes of both. He fell to wondering what guests Max himself would invite. It was useless to think of Berenice. Even Max would hardly dare to bring as his aunt's guest a woman against whom she was so prejudiced.

Miss Egerton broke in upon Borrowdean's musings by suggesting that every one retire early in order to feel fresh in the morning when Max and her other guests should arrive. Mrs. Dalrymple was quick to avail herself of the opportunity to escape to the seclusion of her own rooms, and Miss Egerton, after a second tour of the house to make herself doubly certain that everything was locked up as it should be, permitted Ahmed to extinguish the candles in the hall and mounted to her chamber. Evans, who had finally secured permission to sleep on the couch in her mistress's room, besought Borrowdean in an agonized whisper to leave his door unbolted so that she could call him readily in case of need. He consented to this although he did not particularly like the idea of sleeping in an unlocked room at Twin Turrets. It would not be surprising if Ahmed of the furtive step were addicted to night walking.

However, once comfortably in bed with the win-

dow curtains drawn to shut out that vista of wild sea which oppressed him, his British stolidity reasserted itself and he forgot Ahmed and all the mystery of Twin Turrets. One face only, a charming, smiling face, remained before his mental vision and he fell asleep with the name of Berenice on his lips.

He was awakened by a hand clutching at his shoulder. A light flashed in his eyes and he blinked up into the panic-stricken face of Evans. She was a queer-looking object to break in upon a man's dreams—her hair in curl-papers, a striped petticoat over her shoulders, and her colour a greenish-white.

"Get up, my lord, do!" she begged. "Somebody's broken into the house and Miss Egerton's going down to see who it is. She'll be killed!"

Borrowdean was dazed with sleep and his chief sensation at that moment was annoyance that the vision of Berenice should be superseded by that of Evans in curl-papers.

"You have the nightmare, Evans," he said languidly, preparing to turn over on his side. "Go back to bed."

"Please, my lord, get up!" Evans' voice rang distressingly shrill. "There was an awful crash in the hall, my lord—didn't you hear it—like the crash of doom?"

Her words brought conviction. What he had taken in his sleep to be a clap of thunder might have been this crash she referred to. He sat up fully awake.

"If you'll kindly vanish, Evans, I'll get up and investigate."

Evans fled, and he, throwing a dressing-gown about him and pushing his feet into bedroom slippers which Pearson had had the foresight to leave conveniently at hand, rapidly made his way along the corridor, which, of course, was dark, to the head of the double stair sweeping down into the great hall. On the right staircase he could distinguish the tall figure of Miss Egerton, resolutely descending. The blackness of the hall below was thinned by a glimmering light and he heard the voice of Morna Dalrymple, not quite so soft and well-modulated as hitherto, asking if Miss Egerton, too, had been awakened by the crash.

The housekeeper came apparently from the back of the apartment where a gallery branched off to the servants' hall and the kitchens. She was attired in a *négligé* of Oriental design, which was knotted about her waist and did not appear to have been put on with any particular haste. The light of the candle she carried made the two long heavy braids of hair which hung over her breast shine like burnished copper and revealed the alarm in her eyes.

Miss Egerton, her usual dignity somewhat impaired by the unconventional arrangement of her own hair and a flannel dressing-gown, obviously put on in haste, was staring with disapproval and suspicion at Mrs. Dalrymple.

"How did you get downstairs so quickly?"

Morna Dalrymple braced herself to meet Miss Egerton's hostile gaze. "I sleep downstairs in a room off the servants' hall."

Borrowdean hurriedly descended. "Will you lend me your candle, Mrs. Dalrymple? I should like to go through the lower part of the house."

Mrs. Dalrymple yielded the candle readily, but, before Borrowdean could cross the hall an excited cry rang out. "Is it anooother idol brawken?"

Everybody turned in amazement. Essy Grieve, a night-lamp in her hand, was leaning tensely over the balustrade of the gallery above. Her comely young face was white and scared.

"Is it anooother idol brawken?" she repeated.

The alarm in Mrs. Dalrymple's eyes grew. "I—I haven't looked to see."

Evans, limp with fear, pressed down the stairs and huddled up to her mistress. Essy followed her excitedly.

"Tha'llt not need to hoont for boorglars. I knaw —'tis anooother idol."

"Is the girl crazy?" demanded Miss Egerton.

"Luke theer!" screamed Essy, pointing to the corner where the statue of triple-headed Brahma had stood—it no longer stood there—"I knawed how it wor—t' third brawken idol."

She ran over to the corner and her lamp disclosed the triple idol lying broken on the flagstones. Borrowdean examined it with interest. The image was made of some kind of pottery gilded to represent

bronze. One of the heads was crushed in as though by a heavy blow, the other two were simply cracked as from the impact of the fall. Borrowdean looked up at Essy who was regarding the fallen Brahma with a kind of awe.

"What did you mean by the third broken idol?"

Essy shivered. "This is t' third night their's been a crash and av'ry time it's a brawken idol. O knaw, it's t' ghost o' Sir Roobert Grainger coom back an' now he caaun't abide thoose idols an' 'e brak's 'em."

Borrowdean turned to Mrs. Dalrymple. "Is it true this is the third night an idol has been found broken?"

Miss Egerton seemed content that he should be spokesman.

"It is true; this is the third night." Mrs. Dalrymple spoke slowly and as though with reluctance.

"How do you account for it?"

She shrugged her shoulders and smiled a little wearily. "I can't account for it. It's all a mystery."

"Nonsense!" broke in Miss Egerton. "Idols don't fall down without hands to push them."

"Where is Ahmed?" asked Borrowdean quickly. The absence of the butler was rather odd.

"He is probably asleep." Mrs. Dalrymple apparently did not like the question. "His room is in one of the twin turrets and he could not have heard the fall of the idol."

"The dead could have heard it," snapped Miss Egerton.

"Pearson," said Borrowdean, addressing his valet who had joined the group in the hall, "go and ask Ahmed to come down here."

As a matter of fact, he did not expect that Pearson would find the butler in his room and he was accordingly surprised when, a few minutes later, Ahmed glided down the stairs in Pearson's wake. Borrowdean fancied he detected a shade of triumph on Mrs. Dalrymple's face at sight of the Hindu. Evidently she had read his mind. His dislike of her grew.

Ahmed approached with a mildly-inquiring deference, as ever, soft of step. His eye sought Mrs. Dalrymple's once and then he stood before Miss Egerton in his customary attitude of respectful attention.

"You send for me, Mem Sahib?"

But no amount of questioning on Miss Egerton's part, or Borrowdean's, could elicit from Ahmed any information that would tend to clear up the mystery of the three broken idols. Upon each occasion he had been asleep in his "so distant chamber" and had known nothing of the happening until Mrs. Dalrymple had bidden him clear away the wreckage.

Miss Egerton turned impatiently from Ahmed and proposed that they make another tour of the house to be sure that everything was as it had been when they retired. At hearing this, Mrs. Dalrymple, who had been bending intently over the broken

Brahma, straightened up. As she did so, some object slipped from the folds of her *négligé* and fell with a metallic ring on the flagstones. Mrs. Dalrymple stooped quickly to pick it up, but Essy's hand was already on it.

"Eh! but it's t' key to th' lib'ry doar," she cried amazedly. "I told yo I didn't lose it."

Mrs. Dalrymple's face might have been a mask for all the emotion it betrayed. There was a faint smile of self-reproach on her lips.

"I am sorry I accused you unjustly, Essy, but you know you are often careless about mislaying things. I found that key in my bureau drawer, Miss Egerton, when I was undressing tonight. I intended to give it to you in the morning."

Miss Egerton held out her hand. "I will take it now."

As Morna Dalrymple passed her the key, the eyes of the two women met and the housekeeper's were clouded—unpleasant.

Miss Egerton decreed that Borrowdean alone should accompany her through the house—Evans went along as a matter of course. They tried the key in the library door and found that it fitted. Miss Egerton then entrusted it to Borrowdean to keep for her.

As Evans again, when her mistress's back was turned, besought him to leave his door unlocked it seemed to him that the safest depository for the key would be under his pillow where it could not be

disturbed without awakening him. He had the notion that Mrs. Dalrymple, for some purpose which he could not fathom, might wish that key in her possession again.

Since everything in the house appeared quiet and he was tired from the long railway journey, he soon fell asleep. As before, Berenice was the centre of his dreams. Perhaps the bronze of Mrs. Dalrymple's hair, recalling similar glints in Berenice's when the sun shone on it, was what brought the latter before him so persistently that night. However it was, he dreamed of Berenice again and even had the fancy that she was hovering about him. The warm touch of her hand on his was almost like reality.

When he awoke, the sun was forcing its way in cheerily through the worn old hangings. The dark panelling glowed in the golden rays, the roar of the sea outside had abated into a musical murmur, and the chamber no longer seemed gloomy. Borrowdean reached under the pillow for the key. He wished to examine in the daylight the peculiar chasing he had observed on it.

He drew forth his fingers in dismay. The key was not there. Perhaps it had slipped among the bed-clothes. He got up and searched carefully. But it was useless—the key had disappeared!

CHAPTER VII

GUESTS ARRIVE

WHEN Miss Egerton learned of the disappearance of the key, her indignation was so extreme that she almost taxed Mrs. Dalrymple with the theft of it. But the housekeeper's expression was so meekly innocent and her astonishment at hearing of its disappearance apparently so genuine, that Miss Egerton was mollified into making a half apology for her distrust.

With the matter-of-fact daylight courage had come back to both Evans and Essy, and the latter with an air of importance and shuddering delight was pointing out to Evans the exact spot where the other two idols had fallen. Miss Egerton, irritated beyond words by this daylight bravery and this harping on what to her was an annoying mystery, went out upon the terrace with Borrowdean to watch for Max. Even Borrowdean was forced to admit that in the bright sunshine the rugged Yorkshire scenery was not without charm. The high escarpments of rock put forth striking colours and below stretched the wide sweep of the sea like a blue carpet edged with white where the waves were chafing against the cliffs. On the left spread a great expanse of smooth

turf, and there rose the roofless arches of Whitby Abbey, standing out like a silhouette on the green horizon. Beyond, a staunch lighthouse showed itself a dazzling white against the azure of the sky. Yonder, for an additional bit of colour, clustered under the dominion of a sturdy Norman church the red roofs of Whitby town.

Miss Egerton drew a breath of satisfaction. "Such a view as this is worth all the unpleasantness connected with Twin Turrets. Borrowdean, look! Is not that the wagonette winding up the cliff?"

"It surely is, Miss Egerton, and there is Max waving to you."

Miss Egerton's austere face softened. She smiled and fluttered her handkerchief in response. Suddenly her brows drew together in a frown of perplexity.

"Who is that woman with him? Is it Miss Roydon?"

Borrowdean adjusted his monocle and stared at the graceful figure by Max's side. Then his eyes lighted up, his habitual expression was succeeded by one almost of eagerness.

"Take it calmly, Miss Egerton. It's—Lady Berenice Coningsby."

Miss Egerton was speechless. She ceased to wave her handkerchief. Borrowdean felt a little apprehensive for Berenice.

The wagonette topped the brow of the cliff and drew up before the terrace. Max was smiling gaily,

confidently. Apparently his aunt's state of mind did not concern him. Berenice, too, was smiling. Evidently she did not doubt her welcome.

Borrowdean moved forward with unusual celerity to assist Berenice from the wagonette, but Max was too quick for him and handed her down with his debonair gallantry.

"How are you, Reggie, dear boy?" was Berenice's greeting. Her voice was slow and soft, almost languid, and yet very pleasant to listen to.

Also she made a very pleasant picture to look at in her lavender tailor gown—tall, slender, instinct with grace, with dark hair showing auburn glints, eyes of a dusky violet hue, full red lips, and a saucy little nose, sufficiently *retroussé* to lend a piquant charm to her beauty and save it from a suspicion of languor.

Max, taking the bull by the horns, led Berenice directly to Miss Egerton, who had made no movement to advance toward them.

"Aunt Van," he said with an audacious smile, "I want to present to you my friend—and your guest—Lady Berenice Coningsby."

It was the first time the two women had met and Berenice could not but be conscious of the hostility under Miss Egerton's frigidly polite greeting, yet she gave no indication of having observed it and her manner was frankly cordial as she told her hostess how much she appreciated her invitation to visit at Twin Turrets.

Miss Egerton's eyes were severe as they rested for a moment on Max's face, which was crimson with suppressed laughter.

"Will you come into the house, Lady Berenice?" she asked coldly.

Berenice prepared to follow her hostess, then turned to Borrowdean. "Reggie, won't you bring in Pompon? I wouldn't trust him to Max. He's too irresponsible."

"Delighted, I'm sure," Borrowdean murmured vaguely as he watched Max follow Berenice into the house, whispering gay nothings in her ear.

From the seat of the wagonette Borrowdean abstractedly lifted down a fawn-coloured, silky-haired Pomeranian adorned with a splashing lavender bow, the exact shade of Berenice's gown. Pompon was a snappish little creature to every one except his mistress, as Borrowdean knew, and he carried the dog rather gingerly into the hall where Berenice, out of a sincere wish to make herself agreeable, was trying to admire the Hindu curios. Miss Egerton had ordered the statue of Brahma set upright in its former position and the two remaining heads leered forth from the recess. Max showed an extraordinary interest in the fact that one head had been broken in and this interest grew when he learned that two other idols had been shattered in the same inexplicable fashion. He asked so many questions concerning these happenings that Miss Egerton, who had

not yet granted him her forgiveness, became quite irritated.

Pompon took an immediate dislike to the idols and raised a series of shrill yelps. Borrowdean, who was holding the Pomeranian awkwardly under one arm, turned helplessly to Berenice. "I say, what am I to do with this chap?"

Berenice with a comical look of reproach gathered the little creature to her breast and kissed him on the tip of his funny black nose. Miss Egerton frowned disapproval. She detested such demonstrations.

Max made a rueful face. "Why waste your caresses on that unappreciative little beast of a Pomeranian, Berenice?"

Miss Egerton cut short the bantering retort on Berenice's lips by suggesting that she would probably wish to go to her room and rest before luncheon.

When they were alone together in the hall, Max slipped his arm persuasively through Borrowdean's.

"Reggie, you'll give me free way with Berenice, won't you? I know you're a little soft on her yourself, but, old man, she's the one woman I ever was really mad about, probably because, unlike the others, she's a bit indifferent, elusive you might say—laughs at me when I make love to her. But I'm bringing her around, if you'll only keep Ethie off me, and yourself in the background. Do you know, I think she rather likes you."

"Only as a friend." Borrowdean's voice held a

note of bitterness. "Don't worry, Max. There could never be any sentiment between us. As Berenice herself has told me, I am too hopelessly conventional for a woman ever to fall in love with."

At this moment Morna Dalrymple descended the stairs and came straight toward Borrowdean. Her pallor was intense and there was trouble in her eyes.

"I beg your pardon, Lord Borrowdean, but will you tell me the name of that lady who has just arrived?"

"Lady Berenice Coningsby." Borrowdean could not repress the surprise in his tone. "Mrs. Dalrymple, Mr. Egerton," he introduced perfunctorily.

Max bowed a little carelessly—and his glance was appraising. Mrs. Dalrymple coloured ever so slightly at meeting his almost insolently admiring eyes, but it struck Borrowdean that she did not flush entirely from displeasure.

"Thank you, Lord Borrowdean," she said nervously, "I thought that I had seen Lady Berenice Coningsby somewhere before, but I—I was mistaken."

Max looked after her curiously as she hastily withdrew from the hall; there was a mocking twist to his mouth.

"Interesting type—Mrs. Dalrymple. If it weren't for Berenice—" He broke off with a laugh. "I say, Reggie, why do you suppose she was so confoundedly anxious to know Berenice's name?"

When Miss Egerton came downstairs again, Max

made his peace with her by promising to call on Eloise Eversleigh that very afternoon.

"You know, Aunt Van," with a wink at Borrowdean, "I invited Berenice more or less on Reginald's account. He will need some occupation while I am playing squire to Eloise."

"He could have occupied himself with Miss Roydon."

Max gave a soft laugh of mischief. "I think Reggie can take care of two; if he can't—why I'll come to his aid."

Miss Egerton tried to look stern, but even she was not proof against the twinkle in Max's eyes and she smiled in spite of herself. He put his arm about her and kissed her lightly.

"We're friends again, eh, Aunt Van?"

"Max, you're incorrigible! You know I can't be angry with you. You promise to be very agreeable to Miss Eversleigh?"

Max promised and went upstairs laughing. Ahmed followed respectfully, carrying his Gladstone bag.

An hour or so later Borrowdean found Max in the hall again examining the broken Brahma with minute attention.

"My word, Max, are you becoming a convert to Brahma?"

Max swung round hastily. "Epicurus—and Berenice—are my only idols." He spoke lightly, but his eyes were restless and his fingers worked nerv-

ously. "This old chap with the shattered head rather interests me, he's so ugly. What time does the ghost generally walk?"

"You mean—"

"What time do the idols fall?"

"This one fell about midnight." Max's harping upon the subject was beginning to puzzle Borrowdean.

Max stretched himself indolently upon the old settle by the fireplace. "I'll take only cat-naps to-night, Reggie. 'Pon my word, I'd like to lay the ghost of this old house."

Soon after luncheon Max set off obediently for Eversleigh Court. Miss Egerton accordingly unbent a little toward Berenice and invited her out upon the terrace. Borrowdean drew up a chair by Berenice's side and prepared to make the most of Max's absence which he suspected was partly due to a desire to be away when Ethelyn should arrive.

Miss Roydon made her appearance in the middle of the afternoon and Miss Egerton received her with much the same frigid politeness as that with which she had received Berenice. The latter was very cordial in her greeting. Ethelyn tried to reciprocate, but did not altogether succeed and her disappointment was obvious at finding Max gone. Borrowdean again felt sorry for her and mentally vowed that he would do his best to make her stay at Twin Turrets an agreeable one.

About four o'clock Max came strolling back,

humming a gay snatch of song. At sight of Ethelyn who had hastened forward to meet him, his expression was not one of unalloyed delight, but he greeted her pleasantly enough and even took a chair beside her, after throwing a glance of whimsical reproach at Borrowdean who did not offer to relinquish his seat by Berenice. Max interrupted Ethelyn's voluble chatter by informing Miss Egerton that he had a piece of news for her. His eyes were full of mirth and the half-humourous, half-mocking twist of his lips was conspicuous.

"Prepare to write a note of felicitations, Aunt Van. Eloise Eversleigh is engaged to be married."

"What!" Miss Egerton could not have started up more suddenly if a bomb had exploded under her chair. "Who to?" in her agitation forgetting her grammar.

"Young chap by the name of Mountford—in the army, I believe. A good match for Miss Eversleigh, I should say."

Miss Egerton stood up abruptly. "The wind is growing sharp. Suppose we have tea in the hall."

Max's high spirits were infectious and the gloomy old hall resounded to unwonted merriment. Miss Egerton alone had but little to say and sat stiff and for the most part silent with the massive tea-urn before her.

A ponderous knocking that for a moment checked the gaiety of Miss Egerton's guests sent the attentive Ahmed to the entrance door. Max gazed after the

Hindu with a kind of repressed eagerness. Several times Borrowdean had caught Max glancing at the butler in a curious way. What was on Max's mind? His merriment did not seem altogether spontaneous. Could it be that he attached something sinister to the fall of those idols and believed that danger was threatening Miss Egerton?

Ahmed now was gliding back with rather undue rapidity toward the tea-table, bearing a visiting-card on a silver salver. He had evidently left the caller in the small entry-hall. It was apparent to all that the Hindu was labouring under extreme emotion. His face had gone a sickly hue, his eyes were like those of a trapped animal, and the hand that held the salver shook.

Miss Egerton bestowed upon him a prolonged stare of displeasure and took the card from the tray.

"Who is the visitor, Borrowdean? I haven't my reading-glasses with me."

The monocle dropped from his eye as he read aloud the name engraved upon the bit of paste-board; "Prince Kassim Bardai."

CHAPTER VIII

THE RED CAVALIER

MISS EGERTON rose precipitately. "I will receive Prince Kassim Bardai here, Ahmed."

Max looked distinctly interested. Berenice glanced at him comprehendingly.

"It is that same Hindu prince whom we met at the Ascot races and later at the Russian Embassy ball?"

Max nodded, a little jubilantly, it seemed.

"I have heard of this Prince," broke in Ethelyn eagerly. "They say he flaunts an immense ruby of priceless value at evening functions and yet has no detectives to guard him as most of these Oriental potentates have. He is fairly tempting Providence. I wonder—"

The approach of Kassim Bardai cut short her words. The Hindu as before, was correctly and quietly dressed in European clothes which bore the unmistakable impress of the West End tailor and he showed on his person none of that ostentatious display of jewelry in which Orientals commonly delight. In fact, his attire was precisely that of any well-born English gentleman, his only adornments being the unobtrusive pearl pin in his tie and

his watch-chain of early-Victorian design. He was rather handsome, this East Indian, tall, well-formed, with regular features, but there was an expression in his black eyes and a hardness about his smooth-shaven mouth which did not attract.

Borrowdean found himself staring curiously at the Hindu's snakewood walking-stick—a vicious-looking object with a cobra's head at the top from the open fangs of which protruded the tip of a dagger point in place of the serpent's tongue. With such a weapon as this within reach Kassim Bardai scarcely needed the protection of detectives.

The prince relinquished his hat and gloves to Ahmed, who received them with an exceedingly low salaam. The butler's face showed still the sickly hue of fear. Kassim Bardai did not glance at Ahmed and he himself carefully deposited the snake-wood walking-stick upon a chair nearby. He then shook hands gravely with Miss Egerton, whose greeting was the reverse of cordial, and presented his sister. Lona Bardai's shrinking little figure had been dwarfed almost into invisibility behind her brother's imposing form. There was the same plaintive terror in her eyes that there had been two nights ago at the Carlton and she gazed up so appealingly at Miss Egerton that the latter was moved and spoke to her with unusual gentleness.

Miss Egerton, with the air of one performing an unpleasant duty, introduced the Hindu and his sister to her guests. Max greeted Kassim Bardai

with the cordiality of an old-time friend, but there was hauteur in the East Indian's bearing. It was not so when he held Berenice's hand for a moment in his. His brown face lighted up.

"It is a great pleasure for me to meet again Lady Berenice Coningsby."

Berenice smiled charmingly and Borrowdean had for an instant a savage feeling against the Hindu. It was one thing to relinquish Berenice to the attentions of Max, his friend, but an entirely different matter in the case of an East Indian adventurer. Kassim Bardai appeared to harbour no resentment against Borrowdean for the curtness which he had previously shown him and his manner was courteous in the extreme. Of Ethelyn the prince took scant notice. In fact, his eager eyes scarcely left Berenice's face. She, for her part, seemed to derive considerable amusement from his obvious infatuation, and turned aside his thinly-veiled compliments in her usual bantering fashion.

Max, finding himself unappreciated, directed his attention to Lona. At first, she was too shy to answer in more than monosyllables, but gradually under the influence of Max's encouraging smile, she expanded and told him with a childlike eagerness of the wonderful sights she had seen in London—evidently her first experience of life in a great city. In the daylight and dressed in tailor gown, she looked older than she had at the Carlton. Borrowdean decided that she was probably eighteen instead

of sixteen as he had previously judged her to be. Yet she had the timidity and artlessness of a child—of a child who has always lived in seclusion and more or less under subjection. But Borrowdean was sure that it was more than awe—it was terror—with which her brother inspired her. So long as Kassim Bardai devoted himself to Berenice, Lona chatted away happily with Max, like a child who has found an appreciative listener, but, let the Hindu turn his glance upon her, she would stop talking in a curious, abrupt way, and it would require much encouragement on Max's part, to draw her out again.

In the course of the conversation, Kassim Bardai remarked with a faint smile at Miss Egerton that he had succeeded after all in leasing a house in Yorkshire—as a matter of fact in the near vicinity of Twin Turrets, for the grounds adjoined those of Eversleigh Court.

“By the way, Miss Egerton,” he said, “have you heard that Eversleigh Court was broken into and—what do you English call it—looted last night? Many valuable art treasures were stolen.”

“No; I had not heard.” Miss Egerton evinced some agitation. “Have they caught the thief?”

Kassim Bardai shook his head regretfully. “They are not likely to. It is but another of the many mysterious robberies which have taken place recently here in the North Riding.”

“Mysterious robberies! What do you mean?”

Kassim Bardai regarded her gravely. "Is it possible, Miss Egerton, you do not know that for the past few months there have been innumerable daring robberies in the North Riding? Last night's was the most successful of all. Really, Miss Egerton, one must admire your courage in wishing to occupy Twin Turrets."

The Hindu's voice held a peculiar note and his eye swept the hall, embracing the Indian curios and idols. Several times Borrowdean had caught him glancing sharply at the mutilated image of Brahma.

Miss Egerton stiffened. "My intention to occupy Twin Turrets is hardly a matter of courage, I think. There is little here to tempt a thief unless he desires to make a collection of idols as Sir Robert Grainger did."

Kassim Bardai flushed darkly. "You English have no reverence—not even tolerance—for the gods of other peoples. But then"—he put restraint upon himself—"you do not understand. It is your misfortune. But I do not want to quarrel with you, Miss Egerton, because—it is best to be frank—I have a quite extraordinary proposition to make to you. It is a favour I would ask—a great favour you will say. It is not for myself," as her expression grew forbidding, "it is for my sister."

Lona heard his words and looked up in her frightened way.

"My sister," resumed Kassim Bardai in his slow, liquid voice, "has not your courage, Miss Egerton.

The robbery last night has excited her sadly. There are strange tales in regard to this robber who terrorizes the North Riding. The country folk are superstitious, they say that he is the ghost of some gentleman who was hanged for his misdeeds two centuries or more ago—in fact an ancestor of the late Sir Robert Grainger. According to the peasants, he has reappeared from the grave—or the gibbet perhaps—every few years since his hanging and has haunted the moorland paths so that the natives do not dare to cross the moors at night. But this is the first year, I am told, that he continues the robberies for which he was hanged so many long years ago.”

Borrowdean listened with interest. He thought vaguely of the portrait of the roystering cavalier in the dining-hall at Twin Turrets and of the figure in the plumed hat which had peered in through the library door.

“Silly, superstitious twaddle!” declared Miss Egerton. “I haven’t a doubt that the face of this man who has been committing burglaries here is known to every official at Scotland Yard and it is only a matter of time when he will be arrested.”

Kassim Bardai shrugged slightly. “It may be. You English have little belief in the occult. It is not so with us who are of the East. We have reason to believe in mysteries.”

“How do the moor folk describe this resurrected

robber?" inquired Borrowdean, his voice losing something of its usual drawl.

Kassim Bardai turned politely. "He is said to wear always the costume of a cavalier of your merry King Charles II. I understand that Sir Gerald Eversleigh saw him last night fleeing from the house after the robbery and he swears to the same costume."

"Any particular colour, this costume?" No one could accuse Borrowdean of looking bored as he put this question.

"A bright red—scarlet." Kassim Bardai's voice was almost a snarl.

Borrowdean nodded. "I thought so."

The tea-cup which Ahmed was passing to the prince fell with a crash on the flagstones. Murmuring profuse apologies, the butler stooped and with head lowered under Miss Egerton's reproving gaze, began carefully to gather up the shattered cup, bit by bit. Miss Egerton sharply bade him procure another cup and send for Essy to sweep up the débris.

Kassim Bardai paid no heed to the little mishap, but he did bestow on Borrowdean a peculiar, questioning stare before resuming his conversation.

"You will wonder, Miss Egerton, what all this has to do with the favour I wish to ask you in behalf of my sister. As I said, she has not your courage, your disbelief in the occult. She is of the East; you will understand that she must think as those of the East think."

Borrowdean observed Lona shiver under the glance which her brother directed at her.

"My sister," continued Kassim Bardai, "is terrified by this mysterious robber; she is delicate—her health suffers under terror. She cannot live at the house I have leased; it is too near Eversleigh Court; the windows look out upon the spot where a page was shot down last night by the cavalier robber whom he was pursuing. In short, my sister thinks that she can live nowhere except where she has lived ever since she was a little child—in sound of the North Sea here at Twin Turrets, Miss Egerton. It is evident you do not know," he added quickly, observing her utter amazement, "that my sister has lived in the household of Sir Robert Grainger ever since she was three years old. He was her guardian, one might say. Speak, Lona. Is it not so?"

Lona raised her head. Her eyes were shining. She met her brother's gaze now without flinching.

"Sir Robert Grainger was more than a guardian to me. He was like a kind and loving father. He would have made me really his daughter if—if he had lived a little longer."

"That is not to the point, Lona." Kassim Bardai spoke harshly. He seemed to resent her affection for Sir Robert Grainger. "Show Miss Egerton the letter you found in Sir Robert's desk after his death. It will prove to her that you have some right to regard Twin Turrets as your home and perhaps will

make her more willing to receive you as her guest for a few weeks."

Lona obediently opened a small bag she carried and tendered to Miss Egerton an unsealed and partly finished letter written to a prominent solicitor in Lincoln's Inn Fields. In the letter Sir Robert was making arrangements for a new will to be drawn up in favour of "my ward, Lona Bardai." He described Lona as having been entrusted to his care by her own father at the time of his death fourteen years previous when he, Sir Robert, had been travelling in India. The letter went on to state that it was his particular desire that Twin Turrets, in regard to which there was some legal tangle, should come unequivocally into Lona's possession.

Borrowdean read this letter aloud at Miss Egerton's request, and during the reading Kassim Bardai's face was a study in passion restrained. He seemed to hate the memory of the man who had been his sister's benefactor and who would have made her his heiress had not death intervened. When Borrowdean had finished Sir Robert's letter, Kassim Bardai produced another from the solicitor in Lincoln's Inn Fields which substantiated Lona's claim of being the unofficial ward of Sir Robert Grainger. There was no doubt that the Hindu was exceedingly anxious for his sister to be received at Twin Turrets. But why? Borrowdean did not for a moment believe that it was out of consideration for Lona's mental or physical state. Nor did he

believe that it was simply from a desire to be rid of the care of his sister. There was some deeper motive than this and Borrowdean felt convinced that it was connected with the death of Sir Robert.

On the other hand there was no doubt that Lona herself was anxious to come back to Twin Turrets, but whether it was from real affection for the old house which had been her home for so many years or a desire to be free from her brother's tutelage or some other reason not so innocent, Borrowdean could not make out.

Max suddenly spoke a word in Lona's behalf. "I think, Aunt Van, that Princess Lona Bardai would be a jolly little addition to the house party."

Miss Egerton yielded as she generally did to Max's wishes and when Kassim Bardai took his departure after assuring Berenice that he hoped for the pleasure of seeing her again shortly, he left his sister as the guest of Miss Egerton.

Max smiled quizzically at Lona. "Are you happy now, little Lotus-Flower?"

Lona glanced up shyly into his half gentle, half mocking eyes and her dusky cheek flushed. "I am sure I shall be, Mr. Egerton."

Max laughed and sauntered out from the hall. Berenice, in her frank, friendly way, bore Lona off to the terrace to watch the waves. Borrowdean went into the dining-room for another scrutiny of that picture which was constantly recurring to his mind.

He was surprised to find Max standing though fully before it. Max wheeled quickly.

"So you've come too for a glimpse at this Red Cavalier? The moment you asked Kassim Bardai the colour of the robber's costume, I knew you were thinking of this picture. You hardly took your eyes off it during luncheon. What do you think of this ghostly burglar, Reggie? Does he step down out of the canvas—or what?"

"I think," answered Borrowdean with deliberation, "that it is worth our while to find out."

Max studied the handsome, reckless face of the Cavalier a moment. "This chap is interesting, Reggie. And so," he added with a laugh, "is the little lotus-flower. What do you say to playing a string at billiards, old man?"

CHAPTER IX

A NIGHT OF MYSTERY

THAT night Borrowdean, in view of the disappearance of the key to the library door, decided to sleep on the couch in that room so as to be ready for developments. He felt sure that the key had been stolen for some purpose and he intended to discover what that purpose was. Miss Egerton advised him to keep his revolver at hand and Max insisted upon sharing his vigil. Their intention to pass the night there was known only to Miss Egerton.

After every one else had retired, housekeeper, new servants, and guests, Borrowdean and Max went down quietly into the library where the latter calmly appropriated the couch and left Borrowdean to get what sleep he could hanging in a chair. But sleep would not come. He fell to wondering if Mrs. Dalrymple, whose chamber was on the ground floor not far from the library, could have heard them enter. The more he saw of the housekeeper, the more he distrusted her, and her question in regard to Berenike's name puzzled and annoyed him.

Berenike too was puzzling him, or rather he was puzzled by the note which had been brought to her that evening when they were all out upon the terrace

watching the moon rise over the sea. The note had been brought by a little country lad and Berenice had not been the same since receiving it. She had gone into the house to read it and when she returned her face was troubled and her gaiety vanished. Could it have been a dunning letter from some creditor? Max had said she had placed all hope of meeting her debts on Gypsy Queen, the losing horse.

The hours dragged by without incident and far away a clock solemnly struck two. Max was sleeping peacefully, the moon's rays falling caressingly on his chestnut head. No figure in plumed hat had yet peered in through the leaded glass door opening on the terrace; there was no sound of stirring in the old house, no crash of a breaking idol. An overpowering drowsiness crept over Borrowdean and he fell asleep to dream that the Red Cavalier was stepping out through the painted canvas. The dream was very real; the insolent, reckless eyes of the beribboned rake laughed into his, the arrogant mouth mocked him with its jeering twist; he could even hear the cautious tread of his buckled shoes as the cavalier stole away to nocturnal adventures.

Suddenly Borrowdean sat upright in the chair, wide awake. Some one was stealing across the floor. He rubbed the sleep from his eyes. There at the outer door was a woman's figure! A click of the lock and she was gone, hurrying across the terrace. He sprang to the door; it was locked behind

her, and she had disappeared into the night which the moon, buried in scurrying clouds, no longer lighted. He had caught but a transient glimpse of the woman, wrapped in a long mantle and with a scarf or veil floating about her head, but he knew she was Morna Dalrymple. It *was* she then who had taken the key from under his pillow.

As he turned from the door he made another discovery. The couch was vacant and Max gone. He struck a match and lighted a candle to make sure that his friend was not playing him some trick. But no, he was alone in the room. He looked out into the corridor and called Max's name softly. There was no response.

Borrowdean then blew out the candle and settled himself in his former chair prepared to wait for Mrs. Dalrymple's return. As a precaution against dozing off again, he lit a cigarette and resolutely kept his thoughts fastened on the mysteries that troubled him. He did not regard Max's disappearance as one of them. Max had probably found the couch uncomfortable for an extended nap and had gone up to bed, doubtless laughing to himself at the surprise he should cause Borrowdean.

The minutes dragged by, the pulsing of the sea outside, the only sound audible now, was dangerously soothing, and Borrowdean, for all his efforts to awake, was growing sleepy again, when on a sudden the hush that held Twin Turrets was broken by a peculiar, drilling noise. It was not loud, it was

subdued, cautious, as though the maker of it feared that some one would hear. Yet the noise went on steadily, resolutely, purposefully.

At first Borrowdean was at a loss to locate it, then he decided that it must come from the great hall. He hated to leave the library even for a moment lest Mrs. Dalrymple return in his absence, but he must find out what that drilling was. Halfway to the hall, he was checked by a low, startled scream. Then a familiar voice said softly:

“Don’t be alarmed, little Lotus-Flower. It is only I, Maxwell Egerton.”

Borrowdean hurried into the hall. The dawn which was just sending its pale light through the high windows revealed Max in his dressing-gown as Borrowdean had seen him last, and at the base of the double stair Lona in *négligé*, her dusky hair falling like a cloud about her shoulders and her eyes more than ever like those of a frightened fawn.

“By George! Reggie,” Max called out, “did you hear the noise too? I was just about to get into bed—forgive me for deserting you, old chap, but that couch was never meant to spend the night on—when I heard a jolly queer noise. At first it was very faint and I thought I was imagining it, but it grew louder and I ran down to investigate. When I got here the ghost had vanished. Then her little highness,” turning with a half tender, half mocking smile to Lona, “came down, too, and mistook me for the ghost. Didn’t you, little Lotus-Flower?”

"I—I was all dazed," she faltered. "I think I am hardly awake even now."

"It's a sleepy little Lotus-Flower, eh?" Max spoke very gently. "You had better go back to bed, little princess."

"I must find out first what that noise was," demurred Lona anxiously. "I think—I think the statue of Brahma has been moved."

She ran excitedly across the hall. The idol surely had been pulled out a little from the recess in which it stood. Lona stooped and raised some object from the flagstones.

"See! Could not this have made the drilling sound?"

"By Jove! it could." Max took the object from her hand and passed it to Borrowdean for inspection. "It's a gimlet, Reggie, and a strong little instrument too."

Lona uttered a cry of consternation. "There is a hole straight through one of Brahma's faces, big enough to put my finger in!"

Borrowdean took down a candle from a silver sconce on the wall, lighted it, and examined the idol. Some one had indeed bored a hole through one of the two remaining heads of the image.

Borrowdean looked kindly at Lona. "Don't be too upset over it, little girl. It's only an idol after all. The old fellow himself—your god I mean—isn't actually injured."

Lona smiled tremulously. "It isn't that. I am

not a worshipper of Brahma as my brother is. But—but why should any one—” she broke off, glancing pitifully from Borrowdean to Max.

Max put his arm about her shoulders with a slightly caressing gesture as though he were reassuring a frightened child. “You run along up to bed, little Lotus-Flower, and leave the worrying to Lord Borrowdean and me.”

Lona hesitated. There was a haunting, doubtful look in her soft, dark eyes raised to his.

Max smiled banteringly. “Can’t you trust us to do the worrying, eh?”

Lona let her cheek rest a brief instant against Max’s arm. “I am not going to think any more about it, Mr. Egerton. I shall go directly to bed.”

Max laughed and released her. “A sensible decision, isn’t it, Reggie?”

Lona ran lightly up the stairs. “Goodnight, Mr. Egerton,” she called softly, leaning down from the balustraded gallery.

“Goodnight, Princess Lona.” Max made her a mock, ceremonious bow.

“Coming up, old man?” He turned to Borrowdean who was studying the mutilated idol.

“No; I’m going back to the library.”

Max stifled a yawn. “Suit yourself, you old night-owl. I’m off to bed. I don’t believe the ghost will get in any more work tonight and I’m beastly sleepy.”

Borrowdean returned immediately to the library.

Everything appeared exactly as he had left it and he did not believe that Mrs. Dalrymple had come back. But as time went on and still she did not come, he began to fear that he had missed her after all. The room was almost light now and he ensconced himself in a big morocco chair, the back turned toward the outer door so that she should not see him through the leaded panes and take alarm.

The question of who had drilled a hole through the head of Brahma was troubling him now. And why had it been done? It was rather strange that the sound of the drilling had been loud enough to call Max and Lona down from their chambers, and yet had been audible to no one else on the upper floors. Of course Max had not been asleep. He had said he was about to get into bed when he had heard the noise, but Lona—how did she happen to hear it so distinctly? Her chamber was somewhere at the farther end of the west wing. She must have singularly acute hearing unless she had already been up and about the house. Still, it was difficult to imagine a timid creature like Lona wandering aimlessly at night through such a ghostly old place as Twin Turrets. If she had been wandering about, she had done so with deliberate purpose. He recalled how shocked and alarmed she had been at discovering the fresh mutilation of the idol, but her agitation had not been due to religious scruples or to any feeling that sacrilege had been done to the

Hindu god. What was the mystery surrounding these mutilated idols?

The sound of a key furtively turning in a lock startled him; he almost forgot precaution and sprang up from the chair in his relief that the wearisome vigil was over at last. When a rush of cold, salt air through the library and the gentle closing of the door told him that the one he had waited for so long was in the room, he rose quickly to his feet.

"Mrs. Dalrymple, I think I must ask you how you secured the key to that door."

The woman turned swiftly and the veil fell away from her face.

Borrowdean started back with an exclamation of amazement.

It was not Morna Dalrymple—it was Berenice.

CHAPTER X

ANOTHER MYSTERY

BERENICE stared at him unhappily. "I was hoping you had gone upstairs."

She was pale and looked intensely miserable, as though she had come face to face with sordid tragedy and felt herself cheapened, humiliated, crushed down by it.

Borrowdean was deeply moved to see her like this—she who had always hitherto, no matter what worries beset her, contrived to appear light-hearted and gay. He drew forward a chair for her and she sank into it dejectedly, with a sigh of utter weariness, more of mind than of body, it seemed to him.

He stood looking down at her awkwardly, longing to offer sympathy but not knowing what to say.

"Berenice, old girl," he blurted at length, "you're in some trouble. Can I do anything to help you?"

She glanced up at him with a faint smile of appreciation. "You are awfully kind, Reggie, but there is nothing you can do. I must fight this out myself."

"Berenice," he laid his hand gently on her shoulder—his voice was a little husky—he meant to play fair with Max, to give him "free way" with Bere-

nice, but he could not be expected to remain entirely passive at sight of her distress, "Berenice, if it's—if it's Gypsy Queen that's worrying you, I should like—that is, I—oh, hang it all! you know what I mean, I've got more money than I know what to do with."

Berenice caught his hand and pressed it in both her own. Her eyes were suspiciously bright. "Dear old Reggie, it is not Gypsy Queen and I cannot permit you to help me. I can only tell you that something has happened tonight which makes me wonder if there is such a thing in the world as happiness—for me, at least."

"Oh, I say, Berenice—" It was so unlike her to talk in this way.

She rose suddenly. "Reggie, I must see Kassim Bardai to-morrow—alone. But I don't want any talk about it—any gossip—if I were to write a note asking him to meet me somewhere on the cliffs to-morrow, would you see that it was delivered to him? I don't want to trust a servant—they talk too much."

Borrowdean again was conscious of a savage feeling against the Hindu. "If that chap is bothering you in any way—"

"No, no, Reggie, it is strictly a matter of—of business." But her eyes, always so frank, avoided his.

A miserable suspicion seized him. "Berenice," he said desperately, "promise me that you will

accept no loan from that brown fellow—nothing that will put you in his power.”

“Why, what an absurd idea, Reggie!” She gave a little forced laugh. “If I will not accept money from you, my old friend, surely I will not do so from one who is almost a stranger to me. You will take my note, Reggie?”

He had a struggle with himself, but he could not resist her appeal. “I will take the note. And, Berenice, remember, you can always count on me. If you won’t let me help you with this matter, I wish you would with Gypsy Queen. I know that’s worrying you, too.”

“It is worrying me, but I can’t quite bring myself yet to letting you help me. I’ve just a little pride, Reggie, and then—I know how generous you have been to Max. You mustn’t allow all your friends to bleed you, dear old boy.”

“Berenice, I want you to promise me something else—that you won’t let any one but me help you with Gypsy Queen.”

She laid her hands on his shoulders and smiled at him almost maternally. “Dear old boy,” she said again, and her voice was very tender, “you actually beg people to take advantage of your goodness. Well, I promise. I will let no one help me but you. Now I want you to promise me something, too. No matter what happens, don’t fail me with your friendship. Just now I need it even more than I do money—and Heaven knows I need that badly

enough. But your friendship I can't do without. You're sane, conventional, respectable, and you're wholesome for me."

He felt an almost irresistible desire to draw her into his arms—she looked so absolutely wretched. Loyalty to Max alone restrained him. His emotion repressed made him seem a little brusque in manner as he said:

"You ought to know I'm not just a fair-weather friend."

She gave a little sigh, almost of exasperation. "Of course I know that and I know, too, that you are horribly, hopelessly literal."

Borrowdean stared after her thoughtfully as she hurried from the room. He did not altogether grasp her meaning, but he was a man, and being such, was not too self-depreciative to speculate on what she might mean. At any rate he wished fervently that Max had chosen to bestow his volatile affections in some other quarter.

Berenice excused herself from coming down to breakfast on the plea of "a shocking headache," but she met Borrowdean on the terrace later and gave him her note to Kassim Bardai. She looked rather a wreck in the pitiless sunlight, but assured Borrowdean that another nap would freshen her up.

By tacit consent no mention was made of the fresh mutilation of the three-headed idol save to Miss Egerton and she appeared more annoyed than alarmed.

Borrowdean did not perform his duty of messenger to Kassim Bardai in a very tranquil frame of mind. He could not conceive what business Berenice could have with the man, and he could not but wonder where she had gone last night and what had happened to upset her so. Then, too, how had she gained possession of the key to the library door? It must have been Mrs. Dalrymple—or Ahmed perhaps—who had taken it from under his pillow. But why should either of them give it to Berenice? It was another of the mysteries so rife at Twin Turrets, but this one touched him more nearly because it concerned Berenice. He resolved to think of it as little as possible. She had practically asked him to trust her and he would do so in face of everything.

As he walked on over a stretch of brown moorland starred with the gold of the furze and the broom, he came upon a little group of shepherds and rustic folk discussing the latest exploit of their favourite goblin, the Red Cavalier—namely, the robbery at Eversleigh Court. The cold-blooded pistolling of the page lent an additional thrill to this escapade and the simple-souled country folk were thoroughly enjoying the retelling of the tale. To satisfy something more than curiosity, Borrowdean approached the little group and asked if any one of them personally had seen the cavalier burglar.

One old shepherd proudly declared that he had and the others listened with awe and envy to what

they must have heard countless times before—the garrulous and colourful account of how this old shepherd one night some few weeks previous had been forced to cross the moor in order to fetch a doctor for “t’ missus” and how on one of the moorland paths there had suddenly sprung up before him, apparently from the heather, the figure of the phantom cavalier.

“Ah wor thot fretened Ah couldn’ run nor shout fer halp. Ah joost staared an’ staared an’ ’e staared baack wi’ his crool, spittiful eyes, an’ then he laughed, eh, how he laughed, crool like his eyes. For tree neets aafter Ah couldn’ sleep for hearing thot laugh.”

“But what did this person look like and how was he dressed?” questioned Borrowdean with some impatience.

The shepherd shivered impressively. “He looked like t’ owd devil. He wor tall an’ thin an’ dressed varra straange wit’ feathers in his ’at an’ a quear coot an’ short breeches an’ mony ribbons arl over him.”

Borrowdean found this description sufficiently illuminating and continued on his way. The old shepherd had described to the letter the leering rake in the picture-gallery at Twin Turrets.

Arrived at Kassim Bardai’s house which bore the wholly English name of Avingdon Manor, Borrowdean was ushered by a Hindu serving-man into a long, low-ceilinged drawing-room whose stiff, mid-Vic-

torian furnishings in no way suggested the vivid luxury of that land whence its new tenant had come. Through the open French windows was wafted the scent of wholly English flowers and the sight of the white-bearded Chand Talsdad, stately and dignified in his native garb, solemnly promenading between the beds of roses, mignonette, pansies, and larkspur lent the only incongruous note to the essentially English setting.

Kassim Bardai appeared almost immediately, greeting his visitor with polite hospitality. Borrowdean in return was correctly civil but found it difficult to remain so when he observed the eagerness, barely suppressed, with which the Hindu opened Berenice's note. The contents seemed to amaze him greatly, to puzzle him not a little, but on the whole to please him.

"Would you be so kind, Lord Borrowdean, to carry back from me a little note to the Lady Berenice?"

Borrowdean did not like the ardent gleam in the East Indian's eyes nor the soft, caressing tones of his voice as he spoke Berenice's name.

Borrowdean's back stiffened. "I was prepared to bring back a reply," his drawling enunciation was exaggerated almost to the point of insolence.

There was a slight darkening of Kassim Bardai's face, but he seemed determined not to take offence. "I shall consider that a great kindness," he remarked smoothly.

Pulling the bell-rope, he requested the Hindu servant to bring him letter-paper and writing materials for his own use and cigarettes and liqueur for his guest. Borrowdean, however, declined both. He had come to feel such dislike for Kassim Bardai that it was impossible for him to accept even conventional hospitality at his hands.

The East Indian looked at him a little curiously but did not press his hospitality. Seating himself at a remarkably handsome Jacobean writing-table, he penned, with much painstaking thought, a rather lengthy epistle to Berenice.

When this was finished, Borrowdean rose instantly. Although by no means a man of passions, he would have liked to tear into bits the note, written on strange, foreign paper, which Kassim Bardai, with a few courteous words of thanks, put into his hand. There was an air of confidence, of assured power about the Hindu which particularly irritated him. Then, too, he felt a ridiculous resentment against him for the simple fact that he wore the clothes of an Englishman and wore them also with correctness and ease as though he had never known any different garb. To Borrowdean, who, perhaps, was too insular in his prejudices, this seemed nothing short of usurpation. Moreover, if this handsome, arrogant East Indian could thus readily usurp the dress and bearing of an Englishman might he not also usurp the privilege of taking an Englishwoman to wife? Borrowdean caught a

glimpse of his own face in a wall-mirror and was dismayed by its expression of obvious rage. He had always prided himself on his self-control and never in the company of casual acquaintances had his features betrayed a stronger emotion than good-natured boredom. But now here was this brown man in whose veins surged the hot blood of an alien race, only superficially civilized, putting to shame in the matter of courtesy and self-restraint one who was a descendant of generations of conventional-living, cool-blooded Saxons.

Borrowdean took hold of himself. His face no longer expressed anything but the impassivity of high-bred indifference.

"Pray don't mention it, Prince," he drawled. "It gives me pleasure to carry your note to Lady Berenice."

Kassim Bardai, with an air of amiable condescension, accompanied his visitor to the porch.

"I suppose there were no unusual occurrences at Twin Turrets last night—no visit from the Red Cavalier, as the country folk call this picturesque North Riding robber?"

Borrowdean lifted the ribbon of his monocle and stared deliberately through the glass at Kassim Bardai. "You take a tremendous interest in Twin Turrets, don't you?"

"But naturally, Lord Borrowdean, since it has been the home of my sister for so many years."

The calm hauteur of the Hindu's answering stare

stirred Borrowdean to anger. For an instant his eyes blazed, but almost immediately a bored look filmed them once more.

"You will be glad to hear, Prince Kassim," his voice drawling and polite, "that your sister is well and happy this morning. I daresay it is the North Sea air."

The Hindu nodded gravely. "Without doubt it is the North Sea air. For my sister it is always a tonic. Lord Borrowdean, may I trouble you to convey my respectful good wishes to that intrepid lady, Miss Egerton?"

Borrowdean found Kassim Bardai's tone as he uttered these last words particularly objectionable and he walked quickly away from Avingdon Manor lest he again lose control of himself.

Berenice was awaiting him on the terrace and she received the Hindu's note with a feverish eagerness which served to increase Borrowdean's resentment against the East Indian. She went up to her room to read the reply. She was a few minutes late to luncheon, but seemed to be unaware of Miss Egerton's displeasure and entered at once into a lively skirmish of words with Max. But her gaiety was fitful and now and then Borrowdean would see the shadow of some trouble darkening her eyes.

After luncheon she contrived to escape from Max and disappeared without any one knowing where she went. But Borrowdean knew that she had gone to meet Kassim Bardai and his heart was heavy.

He felt utterly unequal to the task of trying to keep Ethelyn away from Max as he had promised to do—in his present mood her inconsequent chatter would be maddening, so he, too, wandered off alone. Some irresistible impulse drew him to the cliffs. He did not intend to spy upon Berenice, but he distrusted Kassim Bardai as much as he disliked him and he knew that the Hindu was capable of violence if any purpose of his were thwarted.

As a rule Borrowdean was not in the least addicted to the exercise of rock climbing, but this afternoon he scrambled zealously over great masses of cliff till he reached a lofty scaur which offered an almost limitless panorama of sea, sands, and cliffs. The waves were breaking all around the jagged scaur, filling the air with their booming, while a strong wind blew the white spray high above the foaming crests, and Borrowdean, as he lay stretched full length upon the promontory, resting after his unwonted exertions, felt his face sting from the salty moisture. The sky was sharply blue, but the sea was full of shadows, of vague, weird colours, greyish green, purply-blue, gold-flecked where the sun danced upon the waters, and again dusky violet like Berenice's eyes.

That distant figure in white coming lightly over the rocks, was it Berenice? Raising himself on his elbow, he gazed intently at the graceful figure. As it came nearer he saw that it was Berenice. She stood now in indecision upon a bare, black nab of

rock, the wind blowing her skirts bewilderingly about her. She had the little Pomeranian tucked under one arm, the pink of his bow matching exactly the parasol which she carried unopened in the other hand.

She made so alluring a vision outlined against the blue of the sky in her picture hat and her filmy frock that Borrowdean was about to get up and go over to her, even should he be requested to hold the snappish Pompon, when he saw a man making his way toward her with eager haste. It was Kassim Bardai elegant and imposing in his English garb. He was using his snakewood walking-stick to facilitate his progress over the rocks.

Borrowdean settled down again, but he did not remove his eyes from those two standing together now on that black nab of rock. Berenice's greeting had been cordial, but a little restrained, the Hindu's distinctly ardent. Borrowdean had a struggle with himself to remain passively on the scaur. Never had Berenice seemed more desirable, nor Kassim Bardai more objectionable.

Neither were aware of his proximity and they stood looking out to sea, talking very earnestly. They were too far away for him to watch their expressions, but he judged from Berenice's gestures that she was making some appeal. The Hindu appeared obdurate at first, then he too, seemed to be making an appeal. From the East Indian's fervour Borrowdean suspected that it was a declaration of love. At that

moment he would have felt little regret had Kassim Bardai lost his footing and slipped into those angry waves churning around the nab. But nothing of the sort happened, nor did Berenice repulse the Hindu or even laugh at him as Borrowdean expected her to do. Instead she continued to gaze out to sea, evidently thinking seriously. After a few moments she spoke to Kassim Bardai and then they walked away together, he carrying her parasol and assisting her over the rocks.

It afforded Borrowdean some slight consolation to observe that Pompon shared his dislike of the Hindu and was giving vent to his feelings in sharp little yelps which his mistress was trying in vain to check. The sound of a familiar laugh, merry, and yet with a hint of mockery in it, drew his gaze from the retreating figures of Berenice and Kassim Bardai and turned it to the long strip of yellow sand curving like a crescent on the right of the scaur.

Max and Lona were strolling along, laughing and talking. There was no trace now of worry or fear on the beaming face of the little Hindu girl. She was like a happy child off for a rare holiday. She was hanging upon her companion's jesting words and gazing up into his face with shy, but whole-hearted admiration. Every now and then she would stop to pick up shells, exclaiming eagerly over their beauty and holding them to her ear to hear the sounds of the sea. At such times Max would regard her with a smile of cynical amusement.

Somehow Borrowdean felt a little angry with Max. If he were really in love with Berenice, why should he trifle with this little Hindu girl, as unsophisticated as a child in the nursery? Was it all in line with his expressed desire to be on terms of friendship with Kassim Bardai because he represented the fabulous wealth of the East, or was it merely from a wish to find some amusement on an afternoon when Berenice was not available? In any case it was not fair to Lona. Max's interest in things Hindu was somewhat puzzling. Those ugly Indian idols seemed to exercise a sort of fascination over him and he was quite unable to keep away from them. Lona represented that land from which they came but could this fact explain his interest in her? Simple child-like girls were not the type of women which generally appealed to him.

Borrowdean remained on the scaur, staring out over the sea and thinking rather bitter thoughts until long after Max and Lona had gone from sight and the wind had grown uncomfortably keen. Then he rose and made his way back to Twin Turrets. The old house, clinging there to the promontory, seemed more than ever grim and sinister in the mood that held him then. As he entered the great hall, the sound of music led him to the smaller drawing-room.

Lona, her hair blown from the walk on the sands, her face still that of a happy child on a holiday, was seated at the piano. Max was leaning gracefully

against the instrument, watching her with that same amused, cynical smile. Lona had been playing a little timidly, but under Max's encouraging words, she gained confidence and the music swelled beneath her fingers. Strange chords crashed and broke; the mystery and the haunting sadness of the East alike brooded in the weird notes. The wild, quivering melody evoked all manner of extravagant, impossible dreams.

Borrowdean was conscious of a sense of unutterable depression, but Max wore still the smile of the cynic. One last shivering chord and Lona's fingers dropped from the keys. She looked up at Max, half in doubt, half in hope.

Again he put his arm lightly about her shoulders and patted her on the arm. "Bravo, little Lotus-Flower!"

She thrilled under his touch, her eyes shone, her dusky cheeks were aflame.

Borrowdean turned away abruptly. That evening he spoke to Max.

"I hope you'll play fair with the little Hindu girl. She's only a child as far as worldliness goes. She might take you seriously."

Max's easy laughter bubbled up. "My word! Reggie, what a long face. Now don't worry over the little lotus-flower. Such exotic blossoms are not for my garden, but you know I am bound to be decent to her since she is Aunt Van's guest."

CHAPTER XI

THE COSTUME BALL

BORROWDEAN looked down without enthusiasm upon the ancient suit of armour in which he was imprisoned.

"Pearson, do you think it possible for me to dance in this steel box?"

Pearson paused in his task of encasing Borrowdean in the shining coat of mail and surveyed him rather dubiously. "It might be possible, my lord."

"I expect I am making a bally ass of myself tonight, Pearson."

The valet remained discreetly silent. Borrowdean pushed up the steel visor with some disgust. This costume ball, Max's idea to enliven the gloom of life at Twin Turrets, found as little favour with him as it did with Miss Egerton. A ball was well enough, but let it be a properly-conducted affair in conventional, sensible evening dress, not a sort of Bohemian function where the guests appeared in the fantastic costumes of other ages and other countries—costumes which they could not hope to wear with proper effect and which consequently made them seem ridiculous.

Borrowdean had not particularly enjoyed his visit

at Twin Turrets, especially during the last ten days. Kassim Bardai had been in constant attendance upon Berenice; Max as a result had been moody and irritable, and upon one occasion there had been almost a scene between the two men, the Hindu's anger having been aroused by some mocking words of Max's in regard to the idols, which were holy in the eyes of Kassim Bardai. Berenice, and Lona, too, had intervened, a semblance of peace had been brought about, and Kassim Bardai was among the guests invited to the ball. As a solace for the loss of Berenice's society, Max continued to amuse himself with Lona, leaving Ethelyn to depend entirely on Borrowdean for her entertainment.

As a prelude to the ball, the one intact head remaining to the statue of Brahma had been broken the night before by a blow from some heavy implement and the crash had again roused the household. Essy Grieve chose to consider this as an omen of impending evil. As a matter of fact, Borrowdean was inclined to agree with her. The atmosphere of Twin Turrets on the eve of the ball was charged with unpleasantness and mutual distrust. Some one of the household must be responsible for the breaking of the idols. But who was it and how much longer would this person be content simply to shatter images for the furtherance of some unknown design?

Borrowdean's musings were interrupted by the sudden opening of the door. At sight of the scarlet-clad figure which entered he remained a moment

astounded. It was as though the Red Cavalier had stepped out of the frame which held his painted likeness. There was the roystering blade to the life, with his plumed hat, his resplendent, beribboned suit, his flowing wig, his reckless eyes and his mocking smile. Then the cavalier burst into a merry, audacious, boyish laugh, and the spell was broken.

"Max! Why the deuce are you gotten up in this fashion?"

Max's laughter bubbled forth again. His eyes now were teasing, the curve of his lips wholly humorous.

"Gave you rather of a start, eh, Reggie? The guests should be arriving soon. Let us come down and see how they will welcome the famous Red Cavalier."

Forthwith they went downstairs where Max's costume provoked the amazement he desired and brought upon him a rebuke from Miss Egerton, who disapproved, as Borrowdean did, of his impersonating the North Riding robber. Max's appearance in this garb had an astonishing effect upon Ahmed. On the way to the ballroom, he passed the Hindu in the hall. The butler started violently and let fall with a crash the tray of glasses he was carrying. His features were convulsed with conflicting emotions—hate, fear, and incredulity.

"Look closer, Ahmed," Max urged pleasantly. "You'll see I'm not the chap you took me for."

For some reason it gave Max infinite satisfaction

as well as amusement to observe the effect of his costume on others. But no one betrayed more agitation than did Kassim Bardai who was among the first of the arriving guests. His emotions were no less acute than Ahmed's, but in place of fear he showed rage. And when, at a second glance, he recognized Max, he was able to call up no saving sense of humour, but exhibited anger and resentment.

The East Indian's own appearance was somewhat startling, due not so much to the full native garb which he wore with a princely dignity, but rather to the enormous ruby—a ball of crimson fire set in dull gold—which ornamented the breast of his silken robe.

“The Azra El Kab ruby!” Berenice murmured in Borrowdean's ear. “Think what a fortune that jewel represents—and see how boldly he flaunts it!” There was an undertone of bitterness in her voice.

Borrowdean surveyed her gravely. “I hope you will not permit that Hindu to monopolize you to-night.”

Berenice laughed but not quite naturally. “You absurd fellow! I believe you're jealous. I have promised Prince Kassim several dances but I have saved two for you. Well!” as he remained silent, “have you nothing to say. Can't you thank me, at least?”

He smiled painfully. “No end kind of you, I'm sure, to save me Prince Kassim's leavings.”

"Reggie, I never saw you ill-natured before. I suppose I ought to feel complimented, for I believe you *are* jealous." She gave a little nervous laugh. "By the way, dear boy, you haven't said how you like me tonight."

He viewed her critically. She was wonderful as Cleopatra, in a diaphanous robe of violet-blue, glittering with gold spangles. A diamond asp sparkled about her throat and the glow of the hundred wax candles in the crystal lustre above her brought out the rich, auburn glints in her hair.

Borrowdean's eyes lighted up. "You look—ah—ripping!"

The approach of Kassim Bardai, who came to claim Berenice for the dance which was just commencing, cut short her jesting words of gratification. Borrowdean was obliged to call to the fore the full strength of his conventional training in order to return the Hindu's polite salutation. Not only the arrogant, dominating personality of the East Indian, but that blazing jewel, like a splotch of blood, upon his breast, affected him most unpleasantly. Moreover, the Hindu's air of proprietorship toward Berenice was insufferable.

He turned away abruptly as Kassim Bardai led Berenice into the centre of the great ballroom where already more than fifty couples in fancy dress were dancing. He had no heart to seek a partner. Every thing for him was coloured by the fierce, red light of the Azra El Kab ruby, and he felt the presentiment

that something was to happen which would make this brilliant ball seem but mockery.

Unnoticed in the gay whirl of the dance, he passed through one of the long French windows and stepped out upon the terrace to be alone with his thoughts. But even here on the terrace, swept by the ever keen winds from the sea below, he could not find the solitude he sought. The moon, riding high among a few white clouds, disclosed the figures of a man and woman standing together, on the edge of the promontory, cut clear as silhouettes against the silver sheen of sky and water. The fantastic costume of the man startled him for a moment—it was Max in his cavalier dress. The woman without doubt was Morna Dalrymple. She was of course not in fancy dress and was easily recognizable from her general appearance and the arrangement of her hair in heavy braids twisted about her head. It was strange that Max should desert the ball for the purpose of coming out on the cliffs to talk with the housekeeper. Did he mean to solace himself for Kassim Bardai's monopoly of Berenice by a little affair with Morna Dalrymple? To some she might seem an attractive woman, in spite of her air of mystery. Borrowdean shrugged and reëntered the house. In any case, it was not his concern.

Ethelyn, in the guise of Poppaea, and looking not unlike that very earthy divinity with her fluff of golden hair, its hard shade softened by the moon's rays, and her big blue eyes with their expression of

artless appeal which struck the observant as being not entirely sincere, stepped suddenly through the French window.

"I saw you come out here, Reggie. I want to talk to you. I happen to be partnerless, too, for this dance." She tried to laugh, but the attempt was not altogether successful.

Borrowdean glanced hastily toward the edge of the promontory. He was relieved to find that Max and Mrs. Dalrymple were no longer there. Perhaps Ethelyn had not seen Max; he hoped not.

"I want to speak to you about Berenice," Ethelyn was saying. "Miss Egerton is extremely displeased with her and one can hardly wonder at it. You spent the afternoon taking a nap, I believe, so of course you did not see the visitor she had. He was a distinctly unpleasant-looking person, a Hebrew and quite obviously a money-lender—one gets to know that type. His manner was insufferable, bullying even. Berenice went out on the cliffs with him and was gone over an hour. When she came back, her expression was quite desperate. I never saw her like that before."

"Why have you told me all this, Ethelyn?" Borrowdean's voice held a curious hard note.

Ethelyn looked at him innocently. "Why, you're such a friend of Berenice—it's evident she's in a tight place—and I thought you might advise her for her own good. It is equally evident that Kassim Bardai is infatuated with her—"

"But she shall not encourage him if my influence is of any avail," Borrowdean broke in sharply. He understood Ethelyn's purpose and knew that she would go to any lengths to remove Berenice from her path. "I am going back to the ballroom. Are you coming?"

Ethelyn smiled reproachfully. "Why are you in such a hurry, Reggie? You'll not find Berenice there, you know. Just before I stepped out here, Ahmed came to her with a note. She stopped in the middle of her dance with Prince Kassim—made some hurried excuse and left the room. If any other woman than Berenice had abandoned her partner so abruptly, one would have called it a *gaucherie*, but Berenice has a way of making everything she does seem right. No doubt it was necessary for her to leave the ballroom as she did. I suspect the note was from the money-lender."

Borrowdean stepped through the French window as quickly as his casing of armour would permit. Ethelyn's words were rousing him to an unusual state of exasperation. A careful scrutiny of the crowded ballroom failed to reveal Berenice in her gold-spangled dress. She had not returned then. Kassim Bardai, too, had disappeared—probably had gone in search of her. Borrowdean was surprised to observe Max in his beribboned scarlet suit among the dancers. Max must have reëntered the house while he, Borrowdean, was talking with Ethelyn. Max was easily the most graceful male

dancer on the floor and he was in high good spirits as he whirled past Borrowdean with Lona, in Hindu costume, on his arm. He was chatting gaily and looking down with teasing eyes into Lona's flushed, innocently-adoring face. Borrowdean, watching him, wondered if Max were not, after all, a bit of a Lothario at heart. Perhaps this was Lona's first ball. At any rate, she yielded herself to the excitement of it with the whole-souled enjoyment of a child, her young figure swaying to the music with all the charm of unconscious grace. She seemed that night to have shaken off the influence of her brother.

By the way, why did not Kassim Bardai return? It annoyed Borrowdean that he should be gone so long in search of Berenice. If that note which had called her away, was from some dunning money-lender, as Ethelyn had suggested, Berenice in the stress of the moment might turn to the Hindu, might listen to his suit. The dancers came and went between the ballroom and the terrace, but neither Kassim Bardai nor Berenice were among them. Ethelyn did not come in for over an hour after Borrowdean himself had entered and she looked chilled and miserable from her long stay in the cool night air. Borrowdean danced with her twice because Max did not seem inclined to do so. Her hand was cold and trembling and her face intensely white save for a bright pink spot on each cheek. Borrowdean felt very sorry for her and a little indignant with Max. He need not utterly ignore her!

Miss Egerton, naturally, was both amazed and incensed over the continued absence of Kassim Bardai and Berenice. She considered it an affront to her hospitality and to her other guests. Borrowdean, however, thought it unfair that she should lay the entire blame on Berenice. As time wore on, others began to comment audibly on their unexplained absence. There was a general atmosphere of unpleasantness and guests began to take their departure. Max had lost his gaiety and Lona her look of a happy child revelling in the excitement of her first ball. As a matter of fact, Lona began to appear, as she invariably did when in her brother's presence, as though she were under the obsession of some fear.

It was an immense relief to Borrowdean when Max, after one of his numerous excursions from the ball-room brought Berenice back with him. To Borrowdean's surprise Kassim Bardai did not accompany her. Berenice's appearance was such as to create more comment. Her hair was wind-blown and damp with the moisture from the sea, her eyes shadowed, her cheeks flushed. She apologized to Miss Egerton for her absence, alleging as an excuse an unexpected business engagement which had to be attended to that night. Miss Egerton received her apology with a frigid air of disapproval and disbelief.

"Did you see anything of Prince Kassim Bardai during the course of your 'business engagement'?"

Berenice's colouring waned. "I have been down

on the cliffs," she said faintly. "Prince Kassim Bardai was not there."

At this juncture Ahmed entered the ballroom and came swiftly toward Miss Egerton. There was terror in his face.

"Mem Sahib,"—unlike his wont he spoke quickly and jerkily—"is it by your order the lights in the library are gone out and the door locked?"

"Certainly not." Miss Egerton's voice, too, was slightly agitated. She crossed the ballroom in haste, bidding Ahmed accompany her.

Borrowdean followed them, drawn on by that presentiment of evil which had oppressed him throughout the evening. Something made him glance back at Berenice in her spangled dress. Her colour had entirely forsaken her now and she put out her hand to steady herself against a chair.

Miss Egerton stopped short before the closed door of the library. There was no light under it, no sound from within. Miss Egerton grasped the handle; it yielded.

She turned suspiciously to Ahmed. "What did you mean by telling me this door was locked?"

"But—but, Mem Sahib, it was locked!" Ahmed's teeth were chattering.

Miss Egerton grunted incredulously and pulled open the door. The rush of cold salt air which greeted them signified that the door onto the terrace was open, which it had not been at the commence-

ment of the ball. The moon had sunk behind clouds and the darkness in the library was absolute.

Borrowdean interposed as Miss Egerton was about to cross the threshold. "I think you had better let Ahmed bring a light."

But the Hindu had already gone for one. It seemed an eternity before he glided back, bearing a triple-branched candlestick. Borrowdean took it from his shaking hand and stepped into the room.

The light of the three candles was almost lost in the huge apartment, but their wavering glow revealed enough to cause Borrowdean to motion Miss Egerton back. She was not to be stayed, however, and precipitated herself toward the stone-pillared fireplace where a long, shadowy object lay outstretched on the floor. Borrowdean held the candles above it and their flames flickered on the brown, rigid features of Kassim Bardai and glinted back from the stained dagger at his side. This had been taken from the wall above him as an empty space in the collection of daggers showed. Even in that first paralyzing moment of horror, Borrowdean noted that the crimson splotch on the Hindu's breast was no longer from the red fire of the Azra El Kab ruby. The jewel he had flaunted was gone.

Ahmed, who had pressed after them into the library, gave utterance to an inarticulate cry. Miss Egerton, her face white and grimly-set, hurried to the door to intercept the excited guests brought from the ballroom by Ahmed's cry.

Borrowdean stooped suddenly and with a quick, furtive movement, picked up from the floor near the body of Kassim Bardai a small, glittering disc.

It was a gold spangle.

CHAPTER XII

GOLD SPANGLES

MISS EGERTON with admirable presence of mind, calmed her guests by telling them simply that Kassim Bardai had met with an accident. She then cleared the house of all who were not staying there, despatched a servant for the nearest doctor and sent a telegram to Scotland Yard. Having done all that could be done, the strain of inaction proved too much for her. She collapsed and had to be put to bed.

Borrowdean, meanwhile, ignorant of the proper course of action in cases of violent death, closed the terrace door of the library and locked it with the new key which Miss Egerton had had made. Who had possession of the original key was a problem. He had last seen it in Berenice's hand some ten nights previously. He next surreptitiously picked up from the floor two other glistening spangles, laid a curtain of ancient tapestry over Kassim Bardai's body and withdrew softly from the library, closing the door after him. He would have locked this door, too, could he but have found the key. He then went upstairs and had Pearson get him out of his imprisoning suit of armour.

How especially flat and silly the costume ball seemed in the light of what had occurred! The remembrance of Berenice in her glittering frock brought him bitter thoughts. He sent Pearson from the room on some pretext and, drawing out the spangles he had picked up in the library, examined them minutely. They had certainly come from Berenice's dress. He refused to harbour for an instant the ugly suspicion which those three little gold discs provoked, but he hid them away in the inner pocket of his Gladstone travelling-bag, for he feared that, were others to see them, they might not be so conservative in their judgment.

It was almost dawn now and he glanced out of the window to see if there was any sign of the doctor coming. The sight of a figure in a plumed hat stealing along the cliffs filled him with a sense of annoyance. Why should Max keep on that absurd costume and go prowling about in it?

The crunch of carriage wheels on the pebbly driveway drew Borrowdean from the window and sent him in haste to the great hall to receive the doctor. The physician had brought with him the coroner of the shire and a detective from Scotland Yard who, he explained, had been working in the North Riding for some days on the trail of the Red Cavalier.

While the doctor and coroner were busied in the library, the detective—Inspector Burton he was called—rounded up the servants and plied them

with questions. Ahmed appeared to be of particular interest to him. He even insisted that the shrinking butler accompany him into the library. Inspector Burton, with keen, aggressive eyes and a tenacious set to his jaw, seemed like a man who, once he had resolved to follow up a certain clue, would not permit himself to be deterred by any human power. Borrowdean was thankful that it was he and not Burton who had picked up the gold spangles.

At this moment Max ran down the stairway on the right, with springy, boyish step, head up, mouth smiling. To behold him thus, apparently without a care in the world, one would never imagine, in a room not far distant, lay the victim of violent death.

Borrowdean stared at him in amazement. Max was now in conventional morning garb.

"How on earth, Max, did you get into the house so quickly and into those clothes?"

It was Max's turn to look amazed now. "What the deuce are you talking about, Reggie? I haven't been out of the house since you discovered Kassim Bardai in the library."

"But I saw you on the cliffs in your Cavalier costume not more than fifteen minutes ago."

Max smiled sympathetically. "Old top, you've taken too much of something. You never could stand wine, you know. I haven't been out of the house, I tell you. I sat with Aunt Van till she got calmed down. Since then I've been in my room dressing."

Borrowdean considered. "Then it must have been the real Cavalier I saw."

"Sure it wasn't too much wine, Reggie? I don't put much faith myself in that mythical robber."

The library door opened suddenly and the coroner and detective came out. Ahmed, quite limp with fear, followed them.

Max addressed Borrowdean in a quick undertone. "Suppose you don't mention the fact, if you can help it, that I dressed up as the Cavalier last night. I have asked the others to forget it."

Borrowdean looked at Max curiously. It was a singular request, and yet—in view of the notoriety of the Cavalier—perhaps it was advisable.

The coroner, it seemed, had a few questions which he wished to ask the members of the household. He held this preliminary inquiry in the hall. Miss Egerton had recovered her usual composure and came down, with Evans shuddering after her. Ethelyn was the next to appear. Borrowdean was struck at once by the change in her bearing since last night. Then she had been a rather pitiful little object, unable to conceal the wound which Max's indifference caused her. Now she carried her small figure with a queenly air, her eyes no longer held appeal, they were almost commanding, and her over-red lips had lost something of their babylike curves and were hard and tight-set. Even in the ghastly light of candle-glow and struggling dawn, she was neither fagged nor colourless, her com-

plexion still delicately pink and white, suspiciously perfect.

Max sauntered forward and drew up a chair for her. "You're looking uncommonly fit, Ethie," he remarked with what toward her, was unwonted affability on his part.

She seated herself with elaborate precision. "I am glad you think so, Max," a faint, confident smile on her lips.

She directed her attention then to the coroner who was putting a few questions to Miss Egerton. Max remained, leaning with indolent grace, against the back of Ethelyn's chair and did not abandon this attitude when Berenice and Lona came down the stairs together.

The young Hindu girl appeared now like a very unhappy and terrified child and sat close to Berenice, as though hoping to gain some assurance from the strong personality of the older woman. Berenice was gentle and tender with the girl, evidently trying to sink her own troubles in the effort to console and reassure Lona. Berenice, unlike Ethelyn, did not look "uncommonly fit" in the wan light of dawn. She was frankly fagged and soul-weary and had scorned artificial means to conceal the fact.

Mrs. Dalrymple, who was keeping herself persistently in the background, was no more colourless than customarily, but her eyes had gained a hunted expression which did not tend to raise Borrowdean's estimate of her. Neither did he like the glances

which every now and then she flashed at Berenice. It was almost as though she hated Berenice and at the same time feared her. But why should she have these feelings toward one who was practically a stranger to her? To be sure, her eagerness to learn Berenice's name argued some previous knowledge of her, but when he had mentioned this to Berenice, she had said, as Mrs. Dalrymple had, that she must have mistaken her for some one else. But who, if not Mrs. Dalrymple, had given Berenice the key to the terrace door and where had she gone that night? Borrowdean was angry with himself because these doubts of Berenice kept recurring, and more persistently than ever since his discovery of those three gold spangles near Kassim Bardai's body.

The coroner, having ascertained that Borrowdean was the one responsible for closing both doors of the library, inquired severely if, in doing this, he had been aware that he might be destroying some valuable clue. Borrowdean, mindful of those spangles, flushed uncomfortably, glanced hastily at Berenice and answered that his only thought in closing the doors had been to keep the servants out of the library and he had not done this until everyone else had gone upstairs. He observed that Burton the detective followed his glance at Berenice and a sense of disquiet came over him.

The coroner diverted his attention by another question. "Where did you find the key which you put in the lock of the hall door?"

Borrowdean adjusted his monocle in amazement. "I beg your pardon? I put no key in the lock—saw none there. In fact before discovering the—ah—unpleasant occurrence in the library we supposed the door was locked and the key missing. The butler gave us to understand this."

The coroner eyed him reflectively. "So I have heard. But the key is in the lock now. Are you certain you did not put it there?"

"Absolutely certain."

There was a little commotion among the servants huddled together at the back of the hall. Essy Grieve started forward as though she wished to say something, then lost her courage and retreated.

The coroner, observing this, addressed her peremptorily. "You know something about this key, my girl?"

Essy looked ready to cry with terror and embarrassment. "Ah doan want to maake trooble for onybody."

"You will not make trouble for anybody by telling the truth," said the coroner uncompromisingly. "Now then, do you know who put the key in the lock?"

"Ay, Ah knaw."

"Who was it?"

Essy hesitated. Then she flung up her head defiantly. "Ah doan see th' use o' so mooch talk about an owd key. It wor Lady Berenice Coningsby put it in t' lock."

All eyes turned on Berenice. She flushed slightly, but met the coroners' gaze without flinching. In fact, it seemed to Borrowdean who happened to glance also at Morna Dalrymple, that she betrayed far more consternation than did Berenice.

"Is this girl's statement true—er—Lady Berenice?" demanded the coroner.

"It is true." Berenice's voice was even and composed. "I saw the key lying in the hall near the door and I picked it up and put it in the lock."

"When did your Ladyship do this?"

"Why, shortly after the—murder was discovered."

"Before or after Lord Borrowdean closed the library door?"

"After. I remember that the door was closed."

"Then," said the coroner with deliberation, "you must have come downstairs again later. Lord Borrowdean says that everyone had gone upstairs before he closed the door."

Berenice bit her lip. "I may have been mistaken about the door being closed. At such a time as this one's mind is not very keen in regard to trifles."

"Then you did not come downstairs later?"

"No." Berenice spoke rather sharply.

"I should like to ask," suddenly interposed Burton, "if anyone else noticed the key lying on the floor."

There was a general dissent. Mrs. Dalrymple watched Berenice nervously. The latter, however, had turned her attention to Lona and seemed to be

unaware of the portent of the detective's question.

Burton suddenly addressed Essy. "When did you see her Ladyship put the key in the lock?"

Something in his manner or the bullying note in his voice antagonized the girl. She threw back her head with a defiant gesture. "Why does tha aask me? She told tha mann it wuss—afore she went oopstaares."

"Was the library door closed or open?" persisted Burton.

"Ah doan knaw," stolidly. And that was all Essy could be brought to say.

The coroner, after a few more questions by means of which he elicited from Mrs. Dalrymple the information that the body of Kassim Bardai had been found in practically the same position as that of Sir Robert Grainger one short year before, took his departure, setting the public inquest for the following Monday, thus leaving five days for further investigation. This statement by Mrs. Dalrymple gave a new aspect to the death of Kassim Bardai, which, at first, had seemed to have as motive simply robbery, in that the Azra El Kab ruby was missing. But now it seemed that the previous murder must have some bearing on the recent one.

This was Borrowdean's reasoning, but it struck him that Burton was inclined to view the two murders as separate units, and he did not at all like the way in which the detective's gaze lingered on Berenice. He appeared to attach little importance

to the incident of the broken idols, which Miss Egerton related to him in detail, but harked back again to the matter of the key.

Berenice grew a little impatient of his continued questioning. "Really, Mr. Burton, you would almost harry one into admitting things which one did not do."

Burton favoured her with a sour smile and changed the trend of his inquiries. This time he addressed Miss Egerton.

"Do you happen to remember which one of the ladies at the ball last night wore a costume covered with gold spangles?"

Borrowdean felt himself grow cold. He dared not look at Berenice, but he caught the suggestion of an unpleasant smile on Ethelyn's face and heard a smothered ejaculation from Max, who was still leaning over Ethelyn's chair.

Miss Egerton sat up stiffly at Burton's question. "Is this an official investigation of an unexplained crime or merely an interview for the society column of a newspaper?"

"I have a serious object in asking this question, Miss Egerton," Burton answered in his drawling, yet hectoring voice. "I must insist on knowing which lady wore a gold-spangled gown."

Miss Egerton bridled. "I do not recognize your right to insist, and I have nothing to say in regard to my guests' costumes."

Berenice rose from her chair. "I wore a gold-

spangled gown, Mr. Burton." Her tone and manner were calm and collected as though she were merely stating a fact of little import to any one.

The detective wheeled upon her and, plunging his hand into his pocket, drew out and flashed before her eyes a bit of gauzy material, sewn with gold spangles.

"Then perhaps you will explain how this came to be clenched in the right hand of Prince Kassim Bardai."

Berenice quivered. Morna Dalrymple drew a convulsive breath.

But almost instantly Berenice recovered her poise. Her lips even smiled, though her eyes remained shadowed.

"I am afraid that is one of the little mysteries which Scotland Yard must ferret out for itself."

CHAPTER XIII

A MATTER OF OPINION

THAT afternoon Chand Talsdad came to claim the body of his compatriot. The shock of the tragedy had aged the old Hindu, but the emotion he displayed when he looked on the dead features of Kassim Bardai had little of the personal note; it was rather regret for what India had lost.

"He was the hope of the house of Bardai," Chand Talsdad said in a stern, measured voice. "He should have restored the former glory of his race, that was his destiny—not to perish here in this insidious Western civilization which, like a poison in the veins of the men of the East has made them weaklings and slaves. But it is for Brahma to judge—for Brahma to punish."

Lona shuddered at the words of the old Hindu. She looked in a curious, pathetic way at Max, but he avoided her glance and, with his air of careless gallantry, replaced the scarf that was slipping from Ethelyn's shoulders.

Chand Talsdad gazed searchingly into Lona's downcast face and his expression grew sterner and more forbidding.

"Lona Bardai, you are a daughter of India, you

know your duty, you know that sacrilege was done when the Azra El Kab ruby was stolen from your brother. Will you join with me in the search for that sacred stone and aid by every means in your power the mission which brought me over the seas—the mission which your brother was under oath to fulfil? Will you do this, Lona Bardai, or will you earn the punishment which Brahma metes out to those who are faithless to his teachings?”

Lona quailed under Chand Talsdad's scrutiny; but, after a moment, she flung up her head and confronted him with the desperate courage of an animal brought to bay.

“The teachings of Brahma are nothing to me! I have been taught to worship the god of the English, and England not India is my country now. I have a horror of that cruel three-headed god whose priest you are and I would forget if I could, that I am of Hindu blood and that my ancestors worshipped such a savage being. I will not help you, no, I will not!”

Chand Talsdad turned from her with a majestic movement of contempt. “Your faithlessness to the god of your forefathers cannot go unpunished.”

Lona fled out on the terrace to escape the oppressive personality of Chand Talsdad and remained there during the removal of her brother's body to Avingdon Manor. She exhibited no sorrow at his death—only a kind of dazed horror.

Berenice went out on the terrace to talk with her and Borrowdean followed. He could not rid his

mind of the accusation in Burton's face when the detective had flashed before Berenice's eyes that bit of spangled gauze found clenched in Kassim Bardai's hand. Without doubt she could explain satisfactorily how it came there, but the fact remained that she was unwilling to do so, and naturally this aroused suspicion. It was hardly to be wondered at that Miss Egerton already treated Berenice almost as though she were a self-confessed criminal, and yet he found himself bitterly resenting her attitude. She might, at least, waive her judgment until after the inquest.

"Berenice," he said abruptly, "I wish you had explained to that detective chap how a piece of your dress came to be in Kassim Bardai's hand."

Lona started and glanced apprehensively at Berenice. Berenice herself smiled a little wearily.

"What was there to explain, dear boy? It is obvious that I must have been in the library with Kassim Bardai."

Her indifference to the suspicion with which the general run of people would regard this interview was staggering to Borrowdean.

"But, Berenice, don't you see, it looks as though there had been—ah—unpleasantness—between you?"

"There was unpleasantness, Reggie."

Borrowdean felt helpless before her calm admission of this damaging fact. "But you must not let this be known! Don't you know, can't you see—"

"I see quite clearly, Reggie. But what is the use of denying that my interview with Prince Kassim was exceedingly unpleasant? Mr. Burton is already assured of that."

"Then you must explain further. You must absolve yourself from doubt."

Berenice shook her head. "I can explain nothing, to no one, Reggie. But you—you trust me, don't you?"

He gripped the hands she held out to him. "You know I do!"

"Dear old Reggie!" She laughed a little unsteadily.

"I say, let me come in on this, too," exclaimed a gay, buoyant voice, and Max, with his confident air, his mocking smile, strolled toward them. "Don't overwhelm Reggie with your gratitude, Berenice, as though you hadn't another friend in the world. Don't I count a little, eh?"

Berenice laughed with something of her usual gaiety. "Silly fellow! Of course you do. I should be desolated without your championship."

Max laughed back at her with ardent, confident eyes. "You know it's more than championship, Berenice."

Lona suddenly pressed forward. Her face was full of trouble.

"Lady Berenice, do you think that one ought to keep to a promise—a very solemn promise—which they did not want to make and which will injure

some one they are fond of, but who is not—not quite an honourable person?”

Berenice looked at the girl very kindly, but before she could answer Max spoke for her.

“Do you know what I should do, little Lotus-Flower,” his voice held a caressing note, “I should forget that promise which I did not want to make, and I should do exactly as my heart dictated.”

Lona kept her gaze lowered. “Sometimes,” she said sorrowfully, “one’s heart does not dictate what is right.”

“But you have said, little Lotus-Flower, that your promise was not right—that it will injure some one.”

Lona regarded him in wistful silence. There was hopelessness in her young face.

Berenice impulsively put her arm about the girl. “Max! you must let Lona decide this problem—whatever it may be—for herself. It is not for you to find a solution with plausible words that are worse than platitudes.”

Max looked at her with a face of whimsical reproach. “Oh, I say, Berenice, that’s hardly kind of you when I am only trying to make Lona feel easier in her mind.” He smiled at the young Hindu girl with a mingling of tenderness and banter.

Berenice gently pinched Lona’s cheek. “My dear, you tell Mr. Egerton that you don’t need his advice, that you are quite capable of deciding this matter for yourself.”

But Lona broke suddenly from Berenice’s embrace.

"No, I'll not tell him that! I think I'll—I'll take his advice."

Max gave a soft laugh of triumph. "You're beaten, Berenice! Lona esteems my judgment even if you don't. What do you say, little Lotus-Flower, to a walk along the sands? It will brighten you up wonderfully?"

Lona's dark eyes shone. "I should like to go down on the sands, Mr. Egerton, near the sea."

"Come along then!" He caught her hand and pulled her down the steps of the terrace. "As a punishment for your unkind words, Berenice," he called back gaily, "I shan't ask you to come with us; nor you either, Reggie; such a long face as you're wearing would make you a dismal third."

Berenice looked after Max with an indulgent smile. "He's a dear fellow, Reggie! But I wonder,"—her expression grew serious—"if one ought not to tell that little Hindu girl—she's such a child—that Max doesn't mean all he says. And I don't think I should take his advice on a momentous question, should you, Reggie?"

"No." Borrowdean spoke with emphasis. "And in this matter I am not sure that his advice is wholly disinterested."

A little distressed pucker gathered on Berenice's forehead. "Reggie, I have noticed lately that you and Max are not quite as good friends as you used to be. I should feel dreadfully if I thought I was in any way the cause of this. Your friendship is as

good for Max as it is for me; even his aunt admits that he needs a steadying influence. Don't deprive him of it, Reggie. I know you're both rather fond of me and I think the world of both of you, I don't see why we shouldn't all three be good pals together as we always have been, do you?"

Borrowdean lit a cigarette reflectively. "I don't see exactly," he said slowly. "But I don't think we can be."

"Why not?" she entreated. "You seem to distrust Max. It's quite noticeable. Doesn't it occur to you that you may be doing him an injustice? I am sure you are generous and fair-minded enough to trust your friends even if some of their actions do appear a little peculiar. You have said that you trust me; now why not Max?"

In her earnestness she leaned toward him so that her hair almost brushed his cheek. He flung away his cigarette.

"Can't you understand,"—his voice was hoarse, even a bit savage—"that it's different with you?"

Berenice drew back abruptly, watching him curiously for a moment. Then she laughed, and her laugh had a happy ring in it.

"I don't believe you are absolutely emotionless, after all, Reggie!"

Then, even as he stared at her, again not altogether certain of her meaning, a shadow fell across her face. The laughter died on her lips, the light went out from her eyes.

The crunch of steps on the gravelled path made Borrowdean turn. A man, dressed in flashy, but seedy, clothes was advancing with a swaggering assurance. He was obviously a Jew and of a most unpleasant type.

"This man has a message for me," Berenice said in an utterly weary tone. "You'll have to excuse me, Reggie."

Borrowdean went slowly into the house. There was a deadness at his heart.

CHAPTER XIV

THE TOWER ON THE CLIFFS

AN hour or so later Borrowdean wandered out toward the cliffs. Aimlessly following a grassy foot-path which skirted the edge of the rocks, he roamed on till the twin turrets, as he glanced back toward them, were only thin black lines cutting the ruddy gold of the sunset sky. The sudden restless energy which had impelled him to lay aside his leisurely habits and set forth on this long, rough walk by the cliffs deserted him now that he found how far his *wanderlust* had carried him. He became conscious of fatigue and lowered himself wearily into a little ravine between two high escarpments, tempted into this gully by the sight of a chair-shaped boulder wedged there which would offer a support for his tired back.

Once established upon this rock, he looked about him with a sigh of content. The cliffs here were lower, smoother and more regular in formation than those in the vicinity of Twin Turrets. In the golden light of the late afternoon the blueness of the sea seemed almost unnatural and the waves, lacking the irritant of high winds and jagged scaurs, rolled in with rhythmic calm. On the pebbly beach below

a flat-bottomed red rowboat—or coble in Yorkshire parlance—grated gently as the water lapped its keel. Above a wide expanse of grass and bracken stretched away from the cliffs and a hundred paces or so distant rose the column of a small stone tower, its single window facing out to sea.

Suddenly Borrowdean's eye was caught by the figure of a woman coming swiftly through the grass and bracken toward the tower. He recognized her at once by her tall, graceful form and the dark cloud of her hair, for she wore no hat. It was Berenice. When she came nearer, he drew out his handkerchief and flapped it to attract her attention.

But she was in too great haste to observe the flutter of white between the rocks and by the time Borrowdean had scrambled up the side of the escarpment, she had reached the tower and was knocking on its closed door. This was opened immediately and Berenice passed inside, after which the door was closed quickly again.

Borrowdean stood on the scarp, staring dubiously at the stone shaft which had engulfed Berenice. Whom could she have gone to meet there? He was convinced that she had gone in answer to the message brought her by that villainous-looking person in the flashy clothes. The man was undoubtedly hounding her and she had been driven by some stress to come to the tower. Perhaps she was in danger there. The fear of this possibility sent him hurrying forward. Then a thought stopped him. She might

have come of her own free will on a matter of private business. If this were the case, would she not resent his interference, would she not believe that he had doubted her and was spying upon her?

He decided to wait near by and watch. But if she did not come out soon, he would feel justified in forcing his way in. Now that he was close at hand, he studied the tower critically. Built of small, irregular stones crudely cemented together, it stood not more than forty feet high and, with its broad circular base and walls narrowing but slightly toward the apex, it presented a queer, squat appearance. It was possessed, as aforesaid, of a single window overlooking the sea. This was hardly more than an aperture between the stones and the dingy panes were shrouded by a curtain of coarse cotton which successfully balked any intrusive gaze. The low, narrow door of stout oak also seemed designed to repel intruders. The more Borrowdean surveyed the tower, the less he liked the idea of Berenice being within.

The minutes dragged by and still she did not come out. He was growing apprehensive and was about to approach the door and pound for admittance, when it suddenly swung open and a slender, wiry man in an inconspicuous tweed suit stepped out, glancing about him in a quick, furtive way. At sight of Borrowdean, he closed the door sharply and started running toward the cliffs with long, reaching strides, like one trained and practised in running.

Borrowdean, forgetting his love of ease, ran valiantly in pursuit, but, though his wind held out, the other readily maintained his advantage and sped over the cliffs and down to the beach below, leaping the gullies and ravines with the unerring step of an adept at rock-climbing. While Borrowdean was scrambling and slipping down the side of a scarp, this man had reached the red rowboat and was pushing it into the waves, grown hungry to receive it. A moment more and he had sprung into the coble. Bending to the oars, he was borne out to sea, the boat rising and falling on the billows. By the time Borrowdean had gained the beach, the coble, seeming hardly more than a red speck dancing on the water, was rounding a distant nab and was shortly lost to view.

Borrowdean stood a moment in perplexity, staring after it. Although his glimpse of the fugitive's face had been but a transient one, he was sure that he had seen the man before, but where and under what circumstances he was puzzled to know. As the man had hesitated a second in the doorway before starting into flight, Borrowdean had gained a vague impression of a pair of steely grey eyes, delicately chiseled features, and a sneering mouth, the whole countenance suggesting some unpleasant memory which he was at a loss to classify. Now that this man had successfully eluded him, Borrowdean scrambled up the cliffs again and hurried back to the tower, Berenice uppermost in his mind.

Why had she remained after the person she had gone to meet had come out? There was a horrible fear at his heart and his hand shook as he pounded on the door. There was no response, no sound of stirring within, utter silence save for the mournful wash of the waves below. The screaming of a pair of gulls which rose from the sea and circled over the tower made Borrowdean shudder. He tore open the door and stepped in.

His relief was boundless. Berenice was seated on a rough wooden bench. Her back was toward him, her head dropped dejectedly in her hands; she did not look up.

"I thought you had gone," she said bitterly. "Why work yourself into a passion because I did not fly to open the door for you? Weren't you afraid that some one would hear your pounding? You're rather famed in these parts, you know." There was a world of contempt in her voice. "Well, why don't you speak? Why have you come back? I told you I could do no more for you than I am already doing, and I shouldn't advise you to push my patience too far."

"Berenice, old girl!" interposed Borrowdean pityingly.

She sprang to her feet, staring in blank astonishment. "Reginald!"

Borrowdean, flushed and uncomfortable, stood looking at her in helpless silence. He had always found it impossible to express himself when emotion

overmastered him. It was doubly so now that sentiment was a factor.

"I—I hope you won't think I followed you here," he stammered at length. "I was sitting on the cliffs when I saw you coming toward the tower. I waved my handkerchief, but you didn't notice. You went inside and I—well, this tower seemed a jolly queer place for you to come to—and I—I got nervous. I was poking around here when the door opened and a man came out. When he saw me, he hopped it for the cliffs—and deuced lively, too. He was no end a good runner—and I'm not in training—so he got down onto the beach and went off in a red row-boat. It made me beastly nervous wondering what—what you were doing in here alone. So I—I just burst in. I beg your pardon, I'm sure."

A very gentle smile played about Berenice's lips. "On the whole, I'm rather glad you burst in, Reggie. I was in the mood when everything looked black and hopeless and the sight of your dear friendly face is like a—well, like an antidote. You don't mind my considering you an antidote, do you?" She moved toward the door. "Let us walk back to Twin Turrets, Reggie. I know you won't plague me with questions."

Borrowdean thrust his arm protectingly through hers. "Come along, old girl. It's an uncommon fine evening for walking."

"Does your Ladyship often visit this tower?" suddenly spoke up a drawling yet peremptory voice.

A man had come quietly toward them from the direction of the cliffs. It was Burton the detective.

Borrowdean felt Berenice's fingers grip his arm convulsively. But she turned a composed face toward the detective, her expression showing only a natural surprise and a little annoyance that he should address her so abruptly.

Burton repeated his question and his tone was trenchant.

"Do I often visit this tower?" Berenice echoed lightly. "Why should it matter to you, Mr. Burton? You are not by any chance its owner, are you?"

Burton scowled. "Neither its owner nor its casual tenant. What I want to know—and I have authority for asking—is who the man is you came here to meet."

The detective's bullying manner angered Borrowdean, but Berenice only shrugged her shoulders and smiled a trifle wearily.

"Really, Mr. Burton, aren't you just a little impertinent?"

Burton's aggressive eyes held a threat. "I represent Scotland Yard, my lady."

Berenice gave a little exasperated laugh. "My dear man, suppose you do! Does that license you to pry into my private affairs?"

"They cease to be private, my lady, when they have to do with a rotter like the one you came here to meet."

Borrowdean could restrain his choler no longer. "By Jove, if you can't keep a civil tongue—"

Berenice pulled him back. "It isn't worth while to lose your temper, Reggie! Mr. Burton rather amuses me—he is so direct in his attacks."

Burton eyed her sourly. Her insouciant good-humour, appearing to him like a challenge, aroused his bull-dog instincts, and made him willing to sink professional caution in an effort to break down her defences.

"You'll have a chance at the inquest, my lady, to explain among other things the nature of your connection with the Red Cavalier."

There was a moment's curious silence. Borrowdean felt unaccountably cold. All manner of surmises and wild suspicions began to formulate in his mind. Berenice was watching the detective with the faint beginnings of a satirical smile on her lips.

"I am sorry to disappoint you, Mr. Burton, but the man I met here did not in the least resemble the descriptions I have heard given of the Red Cavalier."

Burton's scowl deepened. "I didn't suppose he would wear his toggerie in the daytime. It's no use, my lady. I'm on his track, and I think," he added significantly, "that it will prove to be a double track."

Berenice remained unshaken. Her sang-froid was magnificent.

"You interest me, Mr. Burton. I had no idea detectives in real life possessed so much im-

agination. I shall want to know how you progress with your theories. Come along, Reggie, or we shall not have time to dress for dinner.”

CHAPTER XV

BULLETS OF SALT

MISS EGERTON stared amazedly across the dinner table at the young Hindu girl, who, in the act of seating herself, had uttered a little smothered cry and caught at the chair for support. Her eyes, fixed upon her plate, were wide with terror. Yet seemingly there was nothing terrifying on the plate, only salt—though in the shape of a bullet.

“What is the matter, Lona? Are you ill?”

“Who—who put this on my plate?” Lona gasped at length.

“By Jove!” Max exclaimed suddenly, “some one has been salting my plate, too.”

Sure enough on Max’s plate lay another bullet of salt.

Lona looked at him for a moment with an expression of pitiful despair, then she sank into her chair and covered her face with her hands. Max with his careless, mocking smile continued to examine the bullet before him. He, apparently, took it for a joke.

Miss Egerton turned accusingly to Ahmed who, to all appearances, unconscious of the little scene, was noiselessly and deftly arranging the dishes on the table.

"What is the meaning of this nonsense? If you have so much leisure that you can find time to mix up salt in absurd shapes, I will dismiss the new servants and give you more occupation."

"Pardon, Mem Sahib, but I did not place the salt on the plates."

"Then who did?" with increasing sharpness.

Lona uncovered her face and gazed with a breathless intensity at Ahmed's inscrutable features.

"I do not know, Mem Sahib."

"You mean you will not tell."

There was a flicker of an emotion on the Hindu's brown face, the shadow of fear in his eyes.

"I do not know, Mem Sahib."

Lona rose precipitately. "You will excuse me—please, Miss Egerton. I am going to my room. My head pains."

"Why, surely," objected Miss Egerton kindly, "you are not taking seriously a silly practical joke. Sit down, child, and eat your dinner. Ahmed, remove that plate and bring another. Remove Mr. Egerton's too."

"You don't understand!" protested Lona. "I—I couldn't eat now." She crossed swiftly to the door, and the shadows seemed to steal forth from the dark wainscoting and enshroud her young figure as she shrank past the Indian curios and idols that stood about the walls.

"Could I help you in any way, Lona?" Berenice called after her gently.

"No, thank you, there is nothing you could do." Lona's voice trailed back faintly from the great hall.

Max rose nonchalantly. "Perhaps I can persuade our exotic little guest to come back and finish her dinner." He spoke with easy confidence.

"I don't think even you could do that, interposed Ethelyn in a tone of certainty which held a ring of authority. "She doesn't make as light of the bullets of salt as you do. She knows what they mean."

Ahmed set down some silverware with a little clatter and murmured a suave apology. Max surveyed Ethelyn, his lazy eyelids stretched wide, his smile gone. She, on the contrary, wore a baffling, assured smile. She appeared distinctly pretty as she sat leaning forward slightly, looking up at him. Her bright hair gained a softer shade in the subdued light of the lamps, her complexion an added delicacy, but the blue of her eyes was of a cold, hard clearness, and her little hands, heavily ringed, and hardly larger than a child's, were clasped tensely on the table.

Max grew manifestly uncomfortable under her prolonged gaze. "What are you driving at, Ethie?"

"Why, simply that these bullets of salt have some significance which Lona perfectly well understands. The salt sign is frequently used in India to convey some communication—generally a warning or threat. Am I right, Ahmed?" She suddenly directed the battery of those hard blue eyes of hers upon the butler who stood behind Miss Egerton's chair in an attitude of rigid immobility.

The Hindu slightly altered his position, but his countenance remained impassive. "It may be, Sahiba. There are many signs used in India."

Miss Egerton viewed Ethelyn disapprovingly. "How does it happen, Miss Royden, that you are so well-informed in regard to the melodramatic intrigues of the East?"

Ethelyn laughed—but without mirth. "After I left boarding-school, I spent two years in India with my father. One learns a good deal in two years." She glanced up again at Max who was standing by his chair as though in indecision. "Now don't go and leave us to imagine all manner of horrible things about those salt bullets. I daresay in this case they don't mean much, but, coming so soon after Kassim Bardai's—death—they are, to say the least, suggestive. Sit down, Max, and tell us one of your amusing stories." Her tone was pleading, but her eyes compelling.

Max's debonair smile returned and he slipped again into his seat at her side. "Did I ever tell you the funny mess Charlie Fallowfield got into at the last polo match?"

Borrowdean watched Max curiously. The latter, bending tenderly over Ethelyn as though no other woman in the world occupied his thoughts for a moment, began to tell, in his inimitable way which drew a smile even from Miss Egerton, of the trick played upon Charlie Fallowfield, a trusting youth with more money than brains. Berenice had spoken

with truth when she said that he and Max were drifting apart. And jealousy was so slight a factor in the widening breach as to be practically a negligible quantity. Borrowdean was generous-hearted and could have borne to see Max appropriate Berenice as his right and calmly ignore any one else's sentiments in regard to her, but what he could not bear was to see him monopolize Berenice and at the same time trifle with other women. He did not like Max's attentions to Lona—did not think them fair to the girl—and, moreover, he was beginning to feel a vague distrust of Max—in just what particulars it was hard to say, but the distrust persisted nevertheless.

He observed that Berenice's attention wandered more than once during the account of Charlie Fallowfield's misadventures, but immediately she would force herself to listen again and would look at Max, smiling, boyish, and gay, with that indulgent expression with which she frequently regarded him. Tonight it annoyed Borrowdean as did, for the first time, Max's careless gaiety. It seemed almost heartless after the tragedy which had taken place in the house only the night before. Yet he would have given much to possess Max's boyish exuberance of spirits, his undeniable charm of manner. In comparison with his friend Borrowdean felt himself old, dull, and ineffectual. No wonder Berenice looked on Max with eyes of indulgence. But, after all, was it more than this? Did she really love him or did she consider Max as she did him, simply as a friend, a

“good pal”? Sometimes it seemed to him that Berenice’s unhappy marriage had crushed all sentiment in her and made it impossible for her ever again to feel more than friendship for a man.

He pulled up his thoughts abruptly. What had he, a prosaic, conventional-living bachelor nearing forty, to do with sentiment? It had passed him by in his youth; why should he welcome it now and allow it to make him ridiculous in the eyes of the very woman whose esteem he wished most to have. Berenice was clever—of course she guessed his passion—and it amused her in her lighter moments to fan it into flame. But what she really wanted of him, and needed—had she not said so—was friendship in the true sense. He would conquer this absurd sentiment—he could not hope to compete with Max in the field of romantic love—and he would give her what he was growing daily more certain that Max could never give her—the unselfish friendship that she craved.

He stole a glance at Berenice. She was very beautiful that night, but quieter than her wont. As she turned her eyes full upon him with a jesting remark, he felt, in spite of his resolutions, something warmer than friendship stirring in his veins.

When he looked her way again, he was struck by the bitterness of her expression. She was staring up at the painted face of the Red Cavalier and her own had grown hard and rebellious.

Ahmed glided toward her. “Sahiba, I may serve you to cherry glacé?”

Berenice abstractedly accepted the iced fruit. "Ahmed, did you ever hear from your late master the true story of that ancestor of his, that man in the crimson suit?"

Ahmed darted a swift glance of hate at the beribboned Cavalier, then instantly lowered his gaze to the tray of ices he was carrying.

"The Sahib told nothing to his servant, Sahiba," his voice smoothly liquid as always.

"For my part," spoke up Miss Egerton tartly, "I am tired of mysteries and red robbers, and Hindu idols that bore holes into themselves in the middle of the night. Twin Turrets in itself is all that could be desired, but—these Hindu appendages that go with it—" her gesture and her glance as it lighted on Ahmed said volumes.

The butler hastily approached her. "The Mem Sahib will have a second glacé?" he begged deferentially.

Miss Egerton frowned and shook her head. "I do not believe," she said severely, addressing Borrowdean, as he accepted her rejected glacé which Ahmed absently set before him, "I do not believe in eating a hearty meal, and then making an ice-box of one's stomach. Max," abruptly turning to her nephew, "what do you think of this Burton fellow as a detective? It seems he has spent some weeks trying to capture this Scarlet Chevalier—or whatever his ridiculous appellation may be and hasn't succeeded yet—so I don't believe he is at all likely

to find out who killed Kassim Bardai. In fact, I have almost made up my mind to send for a private detective on my own responsibility."

Max pushed away the glass of vintage claret with which he had been toying. "Oh, give the chap a fair chance, Aunt Van. Kassim Bardai hasn't been cold twenty-four hours yet."

Dinner over, they all repaired to the terrace for a short while, but the recollection of the horror that had ended the ball the night before hung upon them and all were glad to escape to their rooms early. Lona had not appeared again.

Borrowdean went at once to bed, but found it impossible to sleep. His mind persisted in reviewing with painful clarity all the unpleasant incidents of the past day and a half, and they all seemed to centre about Berenice: her inexplicable absence during the greater part of the ball, the finding of spangles from her dress near the body of Kassim Bardai and even clutched in his hand, and next, her visit to the tower on the cliffs whither she had gone, according to Burton's assertion, to meet the notorious robber of the North Riding. What hold could this man have upon her? A sudden vague suspicion made Borrowdean spring out of bed. The memory of the insolent, devil-may-care face of the Red Cavalier flashing before his mental vision, filled him with resentment.

As he could not banish that pictured face, and the bed had become a place of torment, he proceeded to

dress himself partially and then, in his dressing-gown, sat down by the open window and lighted a cigarette for company. The wind came to him with a brackish flavour, salt from the sea, and the booming of the waves sounded preternaturally loud in the hush of night. Across the dim waters, merged in the black of the starless sky, glimmered the harbour lights of Whitby, eyes of hope for weary mariners. Borrowdean stared unseeingly upon the shadowy seascape; his cigarette burned out unheeded on the window-ledge.

Suddenly the strident hoot of an owl startled him. The cry, breaking in upon his thoughts, annoyed him, and when it was repeated several times in succession with almost a human note of impatience in the piercing call, he got up to close the window. It was then he caught sight of an indistinct figure on the promontory below, blurred against the dark background of sea and sky. At first he took it for a woman but, when it stole swiftly toward the house as though some answer had been given to the owl signal, he saw that it was a man dressed in the garb which had come to be associated with the North Riding robber.

Borrowdean seized a box of matches and, hurriedly opening the door of his chamber, stepped into the corridor. He was reasonably certain that some one in the house had responded to the Cavalier's signal and was about to admit him. As he hastily groped his way through the unlighted corridor, he tried not to think that this person might be Berenice for,

in any case, this man must be prevented from rifling the house of their hostess. As Borrowdean reached the double stair leading down into the great hall, he started and stopped short in amazement.

Along the corridor from the opposite wing, a figure in white was advancing with a peculiar, slow, studied motion. There was something ghostlike in the shadowy, gliding form, but Borrowdean, sane and matter-of-fact, did not expect to meet ghosts even in a house like Twin Turrets, so he calmly waited till the wraith drew nearer and then he struck a match. The light flickered on the wan face of Lona Bardai. Her eyes, though open, were set and unseeing, and she did not blink as Borrowdean held the match before them. She was in her night robe and bare-footed. Without checking her slow, measured glide, she passed by him and descended the stairs, not even touching the rail to guide herself.

Borrowdean followed her, a great pity in his heart for the young Hindu girl. Those bullets of salt must have had some terrible significance to call her forth from her bed at midnight and send her sleep-walking through the house—or was it the Cavalier's signal she was going to answer in this subconscious state? Lona had reached the foot of the stairs now and the darkness in the great hall almost swallowed up her little white-clad form. Borrowdean struck another match. There she was, gliding with certain step, her hands outstretched now, toward the huge, stone-pillared fireplace. Reaching upon tiptoe, she com-

menced to run her fingers searchingly over the Eastern curios on the mantel.

Apparently she did not find what she sought, for, with a little sigh, she turned away and glided toward the back of the apartment. As Borrowdean followed, the feeble glow of a candle caught his eye. Morna Dalrymple, a lighted taper in her hand, was just entering noiselessly from the servants' hall. She stared sharply at Borrowdean and there was antagonism and defiance in her look. The candlelight brought out the copper fire in her heavy braids of hair, intensified the whiteness of her skin, and showed up in relief the grotesque figures worked in gold thread on the flowing sleeves of her Oriental *négligé*.

Borrowdean made a sign to her not to address Lona, but she evidently had no intention of doing so. She stood, uttering no word or sound, watching the girl's movements with a feverish eagerness. Lona's fingers were fluttering now over a hideous little idol suspended from the wall. Suddenly she gave a sobbing cry of relief. The head of the idol fell to the floor and from its misshapen body she drew a folded strip of paper.

Morna Dalrymple sprang toward the girl.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PAPER IN CYPHER

BEFORE Mrs. Dalrymple could snatch the paper from Lona's hand, Borrowdean quietly took possession of it.

Mrs. Dalrymple confronted him, a tigrish gleam in her eyes, her customary smoothness of manner gone. "That is my property, Lord Borrowdean."

"I was under the impression," he drawled, "that it was the property, temporarily at least, of Princess Lona Bardai."

"It belongs to me!" Mrs. Dalrymple's voice rose hysterically. "I have a right to that paper."

Borrowdean seemed hardly to hear her words. He had turned solicitously to Lona. Mrs. Dalrymple's excited voice had pierced the subconsciousness that enwrapped the girl. A tremor shook her and her eyes, no longer unseeing, looked now with questioning fear into Borrowdean's.

"Where am I? What has happened?" she asked dazedly.

"You have been walking in your sleep, little girl," he answered soothingly. "There is nothing to be afraid of. Mrs. Dalrymple will take you up to your room."

"Mrs. Dalrymple!" faltered Lona, for the first time observing the housekeeper. She met the latter's unfriendly gaze and shivered. "Oh, what has happened?" she moaned. "Who broke tha' idol?" She pointed to the head of the image at her feet.

"I will tell you what has happened," said Mrs. Dalrymple in cold, incisive tones. "You yourself in your sleep removed the head from that idol and drew out a slip of paper—I think you know what paper."

For a moment Lona looked utterly bewildered, then comprehension dawned in her face. "You mean—the paper?" tremulous joy, mixed with awe, in her voice.

"I mean the paper to which I have every legal right," replied Mrs. Dalrymple, fiercely.

Lona drew a convulsive breath. "I think—that is not so. The paper was meant for me and I found it." She looked very young and pathetic in her white robe with her loosened hair and her little bare feet as she stood defying the older woman.

Morna Dalrymple towered above her in the strength of her anger. "It makes no difference whether you found that paper or not. It belongs to me by every legal as well as moral right."

Lona held her ground. "I do not think so!"

Suddenly she looked about her anxiously. "But where is the paper? Have you—did you take it, Mrs. Dalrymple?"

"I took the paper," said Borrowdean quietly.

Lona turned to him hopefully. "You will please give it to me."

Mrs. Dalrymple laid her hand compellingly on his arm. "I can convince you, if necessary, that the paper is legally mine."

Borrowdean gently freed his arm. "You can try to convince Miss Egerton in the morning. I will keep it until then."

Morna Dalrymple broke forth into angry protests, insisting that she be allowed to have the paper.

Borrowdean shook his head firmly. "I shall ask Miss Egerton in the morning to decide what is to be done with it."

Lona, during Mrs. Dalrymple's protests had remained mute. She now looked up appealingly at Borrowdean. "If you knew," she said in a low, earnest voice, "what that paper means to me, I think you would give it to me now."

"Run along up to bed, little girl," he adjured kindly, "and don't worry about that paper. I shall keep it safely."

Lona studied his face with pitiful intensity. Her eyes were like dark wells of tragedy. "Will you promise not to give it to her?" indicating Mrs. Dalrymple who stood regarding the paper in Borrowdean's hand, still with the tigrish look of a woman who sees herself robbed of her dearest possession.

"I will give it to no one except Miss Egerton," he assured her. "Now, do run up to bed or you'll catch cold in your—ah—the way you're dressed."

For the first time Lona appeared to become conscious of her night clothes and her bare feet. She gave a little gasp and fled up the stairway on the right, just as Miss Egerton, bearing a lighted lamp and closely followed by the shivering Evans, descended the stairs on the other side.

"What is all this commotion down here?" Miss Egerton demanded severely. "A broken idol or another murder? And who was that running up the stairs—was it Lona—what ailed her?"

"It was Lona and she had been sleep-walking," Borrowdean answered. "We waked her and—"

A smothered scream from Evans interrupted him. She was pointing with shaking finger at the head of the small idol on the floor.

"It's the ghost at his work again, Miss Vandelia!"

Miss Egerton whirled upon her and because her nerves were completely unstrung, she shook the maid until every separate curl-paper stood up on end.

"If I hear another word about ghosts, I will lock you up in the library and make you stay there till daylight!"

This threat had the desired effect. Evans lapsed into shuddering silence.

The voices in the hall had roused the other guests and Max, in a very handsome dressing-gown, his chestnut hair carefully brushed, and his expression singularly alert for one suddenly awakened, was the next to appear. There was an aroma of cigarettes about him which suggested that he, like Borrowdean,

had found sleep impossible. Ethelyn, in a highly artistic blue silk *négligé*, pressed after him. Berenice followed more leisurely. She still wore her dinner gown and looked exceedingly weary.

Miss Egerton was just listening to Mrs. Dalrymple's rather hysterical account of how Lona had drawn the paper from the body of the idol and her own claims to its possession.

"You may believe that you have a right to this paper," said Miss Egerton tartly, "but I shall not be convinced until I have heard Princess Lona's story, and I don't propose to remain up all night listening to it. I have alway hitherto been a respectable-living woman and have kept respectable hours. The whole matter must wait till morning. I will take charge of the paper, Borrowdean. Probably it is not in the least worth all the fuss made over it."

"On the contrary, Miss Egerton," said Mrs. Dalrymple in a voice of repressed passion, "that paper is of inestimable value to me. You do very wrong to withhold it."

Miss Egerton glanced sharply at the housekeeper. She was trembling with the passion that consumed her.

"I should like to know in what the value of this paper consists, Mrs. Dalrymple?"

The housekeeper tried vainly to modulate her voice. "It is of value only to one who can read the cypher in which it is written."

"You think you can read it?"

"I am sure of it! The paper was intended for me. It is my right. Every spare moment for the past year I have spent in the study of cryptography so that I might read this paper when it was eventually discovered. You see how cunningly—how cruelly—it was hidden, but the malice that put it there has been thwarted and I ask you, I *beg* you, to give me what is rightfully mine. Miss Egerton!" as she remained unmoved, "what if I tell you that that paper has direct connection with the murder of Sir Robert Grainger and of Kassim Bardai, too."

"In that case," said Miss Egerton with decision, "I shall consult Scotland Yard before I surrender it to any one."

A light of desperation kindled in Morna Dalrymple's eyes. "If you do that, Miss Egerton, you will regret it."

She turned abruptly and walked from the hall.

"In the morning," said Miss Egerton grimly, "I shall send for that Burton fellow. I shall also write to Cockerill and Waddington and ask them if it is necessary to keep that woman here indefinitely. Now I suggest that we all go to bed and try to get a little sleep before another idol breaks. Come, Evans! Well," as the maid hung back, "what is the matter now?"

"Surely, Miss Vandelia, you're never going to take that muderous paper up to bed with you?"

Max burst out laughing at Miss Egerton's look of exasperation. "I'm inclined to agree with Evans,

Aunt Van. A mysterious document in cypher is not a proper bedfellow for a respectable Englishwoman. Better let me take charge of it."

"I do not intend," responded Miss Egerton uncompromisingly, "to humour Evans' silly, superstitious fears. Are you coming, Evans, or are you not?"

"If that paper is in the room, I shan't close my eyes one second," whimpered the maid.

"Then keep them open," snapped Miss Egerton, and began to ascend the stairs.

"Oh, I say, Aunt Van," laughed Max, "don't condemn poor Evan to hours of mental torment. I'll keep the paper safe enough."

"Please, please, Miss Vandelia, let Mr. Egerton have it!" Evans was reduced almost to tears.

"Why don't you humour your maid, Miss Egerton?" suddenly spoke up Ethelyn. "You'll have no peace if you don't."

"That is very true." Miss Egerton looked down on Evans as though she wanted to shake her again; but she restrained herself. "This once I will give in to your silliness, Evans, because I *must* get some sleep—I am sure I wasn't allowed to last night—and I know just how you would carry on if that paper was in the room. Take it, Max."

"And hold on to it," admonished Borrowdean gravely. "It seems to be a very much desired object."

"Oh, I'll hold on to it right enough," said Max with his easy confidence. "Coming up, old man?"

"Not yet. Think I'll stay down here a while and smoke. I'm not in the mood for sleep."

Max regarded him curiously a moment. "You inveterate old smoker!" he exclaimed, and ran lightly up the stairs after Miss Egerton. Ethelyn went up too, but Berenice lingered.

"I wonder why sleep has so suddenly become distasteful to you, Reggie."

"Oh, I don't know," evasively. "I daresay I've had too much sleep in my life."

"No, Reggie," she said slowly, and her voice had an anxious note. "I don't think it is that." She turned and dragged wearily up the stairs.

Borrowdean stared after her gloomily till the graceful form in the elaborate dinner gown was merged in the darkness above. Then he crossed the hall and entered the library. Everything was quiet and undisturbed there, but, matter-of-fact as he was, he could not repress a slight shudder at the recollection of what had occurred in this room the night before. He went to the terrace door and tried it. It was locked and there was no sign of any figure in Cavalier dress lurking about. It did not seem probable that this man had been admitted, for—Borrowdean had to grant it—the person who would have been most likely to admit him had been under his own observation until a minute ago.

Unless—a sudden suspicion came to him. He hastened from the library and groped his way in the dark along the corridor leading to the servants' hall

until he came to a closed door which he judged to be Mrs. Dalrymple's. From within rose a sound of sobbing, low, fierce, and despairing. Borrowdean listened abashed to that heavy, deadly sobbing, the outpouring passion of a soul-wrung creature. For the first time pity began to stir in his breast for Morna Dalrymple, strange and incomprehensible personality though she was. With a sense of having committed almost a desecration in hearing these sobs of heart agony, he stole away on tiptoe. He was practically convinced now that the North Riding robber had not been admitted.

When he re-entered the great hall, he was surprised to behold Berenice ensconced in a high, carved chair near the stone fireplace. She had lighted a single taper on the mantel and its glow shone softly on her face, smoothing away its lines of weariness and enhancing its beauty. She smiled faintly as Borrowdean approached.

"Do you object if I keep you company, Reggie? I am not in the mood for sleep either. I don't want to talk, just to sit here with you. There's a restfulness about you, dear boy." She leaned her head back and closed her eyes with a sigh of content.

Borrowdean, looking down upon her, felt a wild impulse to stoop and kiss the slightly parted, red lips. He pulled himself together sternly, forcing himself to remember that it was only friendship she wanted of him—let Max play the lover. He walked over to the oak settle on the other side of the fireplace,

stretched himself out upon it, and lighted a cigarette. As most men do, he found a kind of subtle consolation in watching the blue smoke curl upward to the ceiling.

After a long silence Berenice opened her eyes and glanced at him with a smile of reproach. "You might offer me a cigarette, Reggie."

"I beg your pardon. I didn't think." He jumped up, tossed his cigarette case into her lap and struck a match.

She made a careful selection, took the match he held out to her, and lighted the cigarette with a little gesture of relief. Then she leaned back again in the chair, sighed luxuriously, and blew out a little cloud of smoke.

After a moment she sat upright and flung away the cigarette. "It has lost its flavour, Reggie—like everything else. Listen, dear boy, I'm worried, horribly worried over the inquest. What will they ask me?"

Borrowdean carefully knocked the ash from his cigarette before replying. "I suppose they will ask you about your—ah—interview with Kassim Bardai."

"Then," said Berenice with calm conviction, "I shall have to commit perjury or plead guilty to having killed him."

Borrowdean stared at her aghast. "What the deuce do you mean, Berenice?"

She rose with a reckless, desperate air. "Just what I said, Reggie. I know it will be hard, but I

am going to hold you to your promise of friendship in spite of everything. Mind you don't fail me!"

Borrowdean laid down his cigarette and rose too. "Berenice, whatever comes out at the inquest, I shall be your friend—and shall believe in you."

"Thanks, dear old Reggie!" She turned and ran up the stairs with a little hysterical laugh that was almost a sob.

CHAPTER XVII

ONE MYSTERY FOR ANOTHER

MAX, to everybody's surprise, was punctual to breakfast. It was apparent at once that something had happened to upset his careless equanimity. He looked serious and a little worried. Berenice's attempted raillery hardly provoked a smile and neither Lorna nor Ethelyn, both watching him with intentness, appeared to exist for him.

"Aunt Van," he said directly, "you have steady nerves and so I am going to tell you without any beating about the bush that I have reason to believe Twin Turrets had a visitor last night—after we went up to bed the second time."

Miss Egerton set down her cup of coffee hurriedly. "If you are trying to be facetious, Max—"

"But I'm not," he declared. "In fact, I am sure this person attempted to pay his visit earlier in the evening, not long before our little Princess"—he turned with a slightly carressing smile to Lona—"started out on her sleep-walking tour."

Miss Egerton stiffened with impatience. "Will you speak plainly, Max! *Who* paid a visit?"

Max looked across at her with solicitude. "Now take it easy, Aunt Van. It was that chap they call the Red Cavalier."

There was a moment's complete silence. Then Berenice laughed nervously.

"Of course you don't expect us to believe that."

"But it's a fact, Berenice."

Borrowdean moved uneasily. Miss Egerton caught her nephew up sharply.

"Will you have the goodness to speak plainly and not make us drag every word out of you!"

Max nodded affably. "I'll do my best, Aunt Van, but it's a long story and almost an incredible one."

Forthwith he launched into an account—the beginning of which Borrowdean, too, could vouch for—of how, as he sat smoking at his window before going to bed, he had heard the hoot of an owl. The persistent repetition of this cry, which had struck him also as singularly piercing, had caused him to glance from the window and he had seen there below a man in the now notorious costume of the Red Cavalier. This man had approached the house as though to enter it and Max had started to go down stairs to prevent this. In the subsequent excitement in the great hall over the ownership of the paper in cypher, the Cavalier had slipped from his mind and had not occurred to him again until shortly before dawn when he had awakened with the vague sensation of there being some one in his room. It was too dark to see, he had no notion where the matches were and, though he listened intently, he could hear no further sound of any one moving.

Being unconscionably drowsy, it was easy to persuade himself that his imagination had run riot; and almost immediately he had fallen asleep again.

But, upon his next awakening in the full daylight, he found that his night visitor had been no trick of the imagination. A chair pushed out of place had first aroused his suspicions. Next he discovered that the door was ajar, although he had been careful to lock it in order to insure the safety of the paper entrusted to him by Miss Egerton.

"And what of the paper?" broke in Borrowdean. "That, I hope, is safe."

"The paper," said Max regretfully, "has disappeared."

Lona uttered a cry of apprehension. "Was that the paper you would not give back to me, Lord Borrowdean?"

He nodded gravely.

Lona's young face grew pitifully wan and despairing, her eyes looked bitter reproach at Borrowdean.

"You have made me lose," she said in a choking voice, "the one thing which might have brought me a little happiness."

Borrowdean, before her despair, felt himself culpable and could find nothing to say. In fact, he looked almost as wretched as she.

Miss Egerton took pity on his distress. "The loss of that paper is most unfortunate, but Lord Borrowdean did only what he thought was right. He gave

the paper to me as a disinterested party and I entrusted it to my nephew to keep until morning."

"We are none of us exactly to blame, little Lotus-Flower," said Max gently, "because the Red Cavalier chose to steal it."

"It was not the Red Cavalier." Lona spoke with hopeless conviction. "It was Mrs. Dalrymple who stole it."

"But Mrs. Dalrymple did not know I entrusted it to my nephew," objected Miss Egerton, bound to be just to the woman however much she disliked her.

"Mrs. Dalrymple stole that paper," reiterated Lona with unshaken conviction. "She would do anything to get possession of it."

"I think it is time," observed Miss Egerton, "that we should be told what was written on that paper."

"It was taken from me before I could even unfold it."

"But you know more or less what it said."

"Yes! But I cannot tell."

"Mrs. Dalrymple," pursued Miss Egerton relentlessly, "declares that this paper has some connection with the murder of Sir Robert Grainger and of your brother also. Is this true?"

Lona quivered. "Please! you must not ask me that."

Miss Egerton was silent a moment. "At least you can tell who hid the paper inside that ugly little idol."

"No! No! I cannot tell that either." Lona

fixed her eyes with a pathetic appeal upon Miss Egerton. "They will not ask me these questions—will **they**—at the inquest?"

Miss Egerton's own eyes grew suspiciously bright. The little Hindu girl had such a hopeless, hunted expression.

"I am afraid it is rather likely," she answered in a softened tone.

Lona gave a little moan and dropped her face in her hands.

Borrowdean turned to Max. "Where did you put the paper for safe keeping?"

"In the pocket of my dressing-gown."

"Not an especially secure hiding-place, was it?"

Max made a wry face. "Not especially. But how the deuce should I know that this Cavalier chap would unlock my door and walk in?"

"As a matter of fact," spoke up Miss Egerton, "I do not believe that he did. Nor do I believe that he entered the house at all. I have discovered nothing missing, not even out of place. It is not likely that he would break into the house simply for the purpose of stealing a paper the existence of which he could not even have known."

"Unless," suggested Max, "some one in the house informed him of it." He glanced up lazily at Ahmed who, while attending to his duties as butler, was obviously interested in the conversation.

There was a curious light in the Hindu's eyes as he met Max's gaze. It was not a pleasant expression.

Max looked away, a cold smile on his lips. "If the Cavalier did not steal the paper, Aunt Van, who do you suppose did?"

"Ahmed," said Miss Egerton abruptly, "we shall not need your services any more for the present. If there is anything required I will ring."

Ahmed made his Eastern obeisance and noiselessly withdrew.

"I will tell you now, Max," resumed Miss Egerton, "that I really think there may be some truth in Lona's suspicions of Mrs. Dalrymple. After she left the hall last night, she may have been eaves-dropping and in this way have learned that the paper was given to you. It is not improbable that she possesses duplicate keys and so was able to enter your room."

"I am sure that is what happened," declared Lona. "Mrs. Dalrymple would stop at nothing to get that paper. She thinks she has a right to it, but oh, it is not so! Miss Egerton, *won't* you make her give it back to me?"

"It is my intention," said Miss Egerton, not unkindly, "to put the matter in the hands of that detective fellow, Burton. The paper must first be found; it is useless to tax Mrs. Dalrymple with the theft of it. Naturally she will deny it and we have no proof. Moreover, it is surely the province of the police to take charge of a paper which appears to be involved in two murders. They can decide to whom it shall be given."

At mention of the police Lona sprang up affrightedly. "I had as soon Mrs. Dalrymple had that paper as—as the police. They will never give it to me and I—I *must* have it!" She became conscious of Max's half amused, half cynical scrutiny and her distress turned suddenly to anger. "Chand Talsdad was right. The English are cruel—cruel and bad to the people of India. Perhaps," she flung up her head with childish defiance, "I will answer questions at the inquest."

Max looked up at her with his expression of whimsical reproach which few women were proof against. "Oh, come now, little Lotus-Flower, you don't class me among the cruel and bad English, do you?"

Lona stood silent, staring at him. Slowly the anger died from her eyes and tears gathered.

"I think it would have been better if Sir Robert Grainger had never brought me from India." She turned and went swiftly from the room.

After breakfast Borrowdean again went out on the cliffs alone. Max was just starting for a walk over the moors with Berenice and Ethelyn. They had asked Borrowdean to join them, but he felt a singular distaste that morning to taking Ethelyn for his charge so that Max might be free to devote himself to Berenice. He was becoming tired of playing second to Max. Berenice could not mean to Max with his volatile affections what she meant to him. Why then should he continue to efface himself? From the cliffs he watched them set out and it

afforded him a kind of grim satisfaction to observe the proprietary fashion in which Ethelyn possessed herself of Max's arm. He would have small opportunity for love making this morning.

After the little party had gone from sight, Borrowdean sat a long time in thought. Here was another mystery to puzzle over—the theft of the paper which was of such inexplicable value both to poor little Lona and to Mrs. Dalrymple. Every circumstance connected with it held mystery. What communication could it contain that must be written in cypher and hidden away inside a Hindu idol? And who had hidden it? One thing, at least, seemed reasonably certain: the explanation of the broken idols might be found in somebody's search—probably Mrs. Dalrymple's—for this very paper. But what connection could this have with the murder of Sir Robert Grainger and with that of Kassim Bardai? Again, who had possession of the paper now? Mrs. Dalrymple, it was likely. He, too, did not believe that the Cavalier had entered the house. As Miss Egerton had said, the fact that nothing else had been stolen argued against this.

Above all these questions and surmises, the coming inquest loomed dark. In what sort of a mess had Berenice become entangled? If she persisted in silence, Burton's suspicions would grow into certainty. Everything was against her: her interview with Kassim Bardai, which she frankly admitted had been unpleasant; the bit of her spangled dress

clutched in his hand; her visit to the tower on the cliffs; and her persistent, reckless silence in every regard. Who was the man she had gone to meet at the tower? Was he the Cavalier, as Burton declared, or was he—Borrowdean lighted a cigarette in desperation. What the deuce did the man's identity matter in comparison with the damning evidence against Berenice of that fragment of her dress in Kassim Bardai's hand?

Berenice's own words pounded through his brain. "I shall have to commit perjury or plead guilty to having killed Kassim Bardai."

Ah! but she was not guilty. He would not believe even her self-accusation and his blood surged with the desire to protect and defend her against the world. He would fight for her against herself as well, and perhaps some day—who knows—her frank friendliness might turn to that warmer emotion which, at last, was kindled in his own phlegmatic veins. Again he forcibly checked his thoughts. He, Reginald Borrowdean, growing sentimental! He who had always viewed the vagaries of love with a bored tolerance, not unmingled with contempt, that men and women otherwise sane should lend themselves to the absurdity of considering each other divine products, set above the general run of human beings. He and Berenice had been good friends, good pals, for years with never a hint of sentiment between them, and then, suddenly and without warning, the madness had seized him. Yet—he

had to admit it—he would not have wished this madness away. When it began he could not tell. He only knew that now life was no longer empty for him—it was incarnate in Berenice, whether she ever returned his affection or not. If only Max would bestow his attentions elsewhere! or Ethelyn succeed in bringing him back to her!

What made Ethelyn so assured now in her bearing toward Max? This had been noticeable ever since the death of Kassim Bardai and Max no longer treated her with scant courtesy, but even paid her little gallantries. What was the secret of her hold over him? Borrowdean, with a sense of self-shame, indignantly rejected the suspicion that assailed him. Max was easy-living and his code of morals elastic, but he was no murderer.

The sight of a youthful figure in a thin, white frock, standing on the verge of a scaur and staring out to sea, drew away Borrowdean's thoughts. Poor little transplanted Lotus-Flower, in what a hopeless attitude she stood, gazing out over the grey, turbulent sea! There was a storm brewing, leaden clouds, bursting with rain, hung low on the horizon, and the heavy wind blew Lona's shirts about her graceful young limbs and played wild gambols with her loosened hair.

Borrowdean was beginning to feel uncomfortably chilly and it made him colder to look at Lona in her thin muslin frock. Getting on his feet he clambered over the rocks to the little Hindu girl and advised

her to come back with him to the house before she caught cold.

Lona shook her head. "I shall not catch cold. I want to watch the storm sweep on."

Her olive cheeks glowed with the sting of the salt air, but there was no glow in her eyes—only gloom.

Borrowdean tried persuasion, but without avail. She was not cold and she wished "to see the storm sweep on."

Reluctantly he left her and made his way to Twin Turrets. When he reached the terrace, he turned and looked back.

Lona still stood on the edge of the cliff, her white frock showing clear against the dull grey of sky and sea—a slight, ineffectual little figure buffeted by the onrushing storm.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHERE IS LONA?

LONA did not appear at luncheon. Essy Grieve, who had been sent by Miss Egerton to call her, reported that she was not in her room nor anywhere in the house. At Borrowdean's suggestion, Essy went out on the cliffs in search of her, but Lona was no longer there.

"Probably she is down on the sands gathering shells," remarked Max indifferently, and resumed his bantering conversation with Berenice.

Ethelyn was watching them with narrowed eyes.

"Lona should learn to be punctual to meals," observed Miss Egerton severely. "Punctuality is a duty which a guest owes to his host."

"But there is some excuse for her this time," interposed Borrowdean. "The poor little girl is no end upset over the loss of that paper."

"By the way," Miss Egerton lowered her voice so that Ahmed who was busied at a side table should not overhear, "I sent for Burton this morning and gave the matter into his charge. He seems fairly intelligent, after all, and certainly is energetic. He searched the house very thoroughly to see if there were any further indications of a burglar having

entered. He found nothing to suggest this even and next he interviewed Mrs. Dalrymple. Naturally he got nothing out of her—the woman is a living enigma—but it is plain to be seen that he suspects as we all do that she is responsible for the theft.”

Max threw Miss Egerton a comical glance of deprecation. “Speak for yourself, Aunt Van, and allow us the same privilege. For my part, I still believe the Cavalier is the guilty one.”

“And I,” said Ethelyn in a clear, cold voice, “believe that it was neither the Cavalier nor Mrs. Dalrymple.”

Max turned to her with his mocking smile. “You speak like a prophetess, Ethie. Who is the guilty one in your opinion?” He laid his arm carelessly over the back of her chair, his teasing eyes laughing into hers.

Ethelyn interlaced her little fingers. She did not respond to his smile.

“For the present I shall keep my suspicions to myself.”

Miss Egerton surveyed her, frowning. “If you have reasonable suspicions of any particular person, Miss Roydon, I should say it was your duty to state them. But of course you will do as you think best.”

It had been noticeable for some days that Miss Egerton had less liking for Ethelyn than she had for Berenice, in spite of the latter’s apparent connection with Kassim Bardai’s death. Probably Ethelyn’s

obvious efforts to keep Max in attendance upon her had something to do with this.

Ethelyn gazed back at her hostess with hard, unflinching blue eyes. "I think it best to say nothing as yet." She turned to Berenice. "You have not said whom you suspect."

Berenice gave a little hurried laugh. "Oh, I don't believe in suspecting people."

"Sometimes," Ethelyn's expression was not friendly, "it is impossible not to suspect."

Berenice bit her lip, but there was no rancour in the frank look she gave Ethelyn. "But why not allow them the benefit of the doubt?"

Ethelyn elevated her carefully arched brows. "There is not always a doubt. What do you think about it, Reggie? Miss Egerton might like your opinion."

"I agree with Berenice," a stern note in his voice.

"Naturally you would." Ethelyn laughed sarcastically.

When luncheon was over, the threatened storm was raging in its full fury, the wind had risen to a gale and the rain was beating down in torrents. Lona had not yet returned. Miss Egerton, muttering something about the trouble and worry certain guests caused her, came into the hall carrying her own gossamer and galoshes.

"I am going to send Ahmed in search of Lona. She must be drenched to the skin. The idea of her

staying out in such a storm! We shall have her sick on our hands next."

Borrowdean got up with resolution from the comfortable chair in which he had been trying to content himself. The thought of Lona wandering in the wind and rain, bareheaded and in a thin, muslin frock tormented him.

"I'll take those things to Lona, Miss Egerton."

Max, who was stretched in graceful ease upon the settle, talking to Ethelyn, but gazing at Berenice, broke into an incredulous laugh.

"Good Lord, Reggie, you go out in a storm like this! Why, a London fog always kept you indoors."

"Well, this storm isn't going to," said Borrowdean curtly.

Max's unconcern over Lona aroused his indignation.

"I'll go up and put on a heavy ulster," he said to Miss Egerton. "I'll be down directly."

Miss Egerton looked dubiously at the perfection of Borrowdean's clothes. "You'll get drenched, too. I can send Ahmed just as well."

But Borrowdean was already half way up the stairs. He had a fancy that Lona would prefer him for an escort back to Twin Turrets rather than Ahmed whom he certainly suspected of having put on her plate the bullet of salt which had so alarmed her.

When Borrowdean came down wrapped in a long, thick coat, he was amazed to behold Berenice in a

tweed ulster, motor hat and veil, waiting at the foot of the stairs.

"I'm going with you, Reggie. I want to get out and battle with the storm."

"But—but it isn't prudent, you know." Borrowdean felt it his duty to object.

Berenice laughed. "I'm never prudent, Reggie. It's no use; you can't dissuade me, even if you say you don't want me. I am a very determined person when I make up my mind. Come along, Reggie."

"Hope you'll have a pleasant stroll, you two," Max called after them lazily. "I really think Lona deserves a little scolding when you find her. I'll hold you to that game of billiards this evening, Berenice, if you are not entirely washed away."

As they stepped outside, the massive entrance door of studded oak slammed behind them and the violence of the wind almost took Berenice off her feet.

Borrowdean looked at her anxiously. "'Pon my word, you ought not to be out in this."

Berenice laughed again. "I'm just in the mood for it! Give me your arm to steady me a bit. Now then, where shall we look first for the little girl?"

They battled their way to the cliffs, Berenice holding close to Borrowdean's arm, and he, trying to shield her as much as possible with his body from the wind and the lashing rain. The great rocks, wind-swept and dripping, stretched themselves above the raging sea, void, as far as the eye could reach, of

any human presence save their own. Wild as the North Sea always was, it was now like a frenzied monster unchained. The vast expanse of ocean was white with the foam of the waves, which hurled themselves in thunderous bombardment against the jagged scarps. Tempests of spray were dashed into the faces of the two on the cliffs. Berenice's veil was soaked and flapping limply.

Borrowdean pulled her aside as a higher wave boomed against the scaur on which they stood and broke over it in torrents of foam. "I wish you would let me take you back to the house."

Berenice shook her head. "This is too glorious to miss! Besides, we must find Lona. Where can the poor child be? Come down onto the sands, Reggie. There is a cave along there where she might have taken refuge."

Berenice scrambled down the steep escarpments with grace and light-footedness as though she were accustomed to rock-climbing. Borrowdean, naturally less agile and, in addition, hampered by the gossamer and galoshes he was carrying, came down more slowly and rather awkwardly.

At last they reached the drenched sands over which the sea was rushing ravenously. Berenice stood close to Borrowdean, her hand pressing his arm.

"This storm is wonderful, Reggie!"

"I say, won't you take off that bally veil?" he

asked irrelevantly. "I can't see you at all through it."

She gave a little low, amused laugh. "You'll have to untie it then. The knot is in the back, stupid!"

She turned her head and he awkwardly fumbled at the knot. Her near presence, the little intimate act of untying her veil, intoxicated him. He caught her by the shoulders.

"Berenice—I can't help it—I love you!"

She gently freed herself. "Not that now, Reggie!"

He drew back abruptly. "I didn't suppose you could care for a commonplace chap like me."

"Dear boy, don't be absurd!" Her fingers jerked the knot apart and she tore off the veil. There was more than rain moisture in her eyes. "Do you imagine I could permit you to speak of love to me while I am under suspicion of being concerned in a man's death? Oh, I know what you would say, how generous-minded you are, but I know, too, what the world will say—after the inquest."

"I don't care a hang for the world, Berenice!"

"But I do—for your sake. I'm too fond of you, you've been too good a friend for me to allow you to mix your name with mine at such a time as this. We will limit ourselves to friendship, Reggie. It will be much the best for us both."

Borrowdean surveyed her gloomily. "And what about Max?" he could not refrain from asking.

Berenice smiled indulgently. "Max is delightful, but—one could hardly take him seriously. No,

Reggie, I feel too sore and bruised and crushed—yes, and desperate—to love any one at present. And really,” with a rueful laugh, “this is rather an inopportune occasion for discussing sentiment. I’m blown to pieces and I’m drenched. I am sure no one else would dream of making love to me in this bedraggled state, you dear, foolish boy! But come, we must find Lona. I am worried about the poor little girl.”

They fought their way along the sands in the face of the furious wind till they came to a natural cave penetrating deeply the high cliffs. Lona was not there. Borrowdean was becoming genuinely alarmed. He thought of her as he had seen her last—a lonely, dejected little figure poised on the edge of a scaur, watching the storm sweep over the sea. Had she slipped and fallen into the angry waves, or, driven to despair by brooding over the loss of that paper which meant so much to her, had she deliberately thrown away her young life? He should have insisted upon her accompanying him back to the house; in any case, he should not have left her alone on the cliffs in the mood she was in.

“Berenice,” he said suddenly, “if you will wait here in the cave I will push on to the nearest coast-guard station. It may not be too late to—to recover her.”

“You are getting morbid, Reggie,” declared Berenice briskly. “Don’t allow yourself to imagine that anything like that has happened to Lona. We will

go back to Twin Turrets. I am sure she will have returned by now, or if not, she must have gone to Avingdon Manor to see that old Hindu—what's his name?"

Borrowdean shook his head in dissent. "She would not go there. She stands in fear of the old chap."

"But he is of her race. She might think it necessary to tell him about that paper—that is, if it really is connected with her brother's death. In any case, Reggie, the coast-guards could not launch a boat in such a storm as this. Look at those waves—and the wind, if anything, is increasing! I feel almost certain we shall find Lona at Twin Turrets."

Lona was not there, however, and a message of inquiry despatched to Avingdon Manor brought back the information that neither was she there and that Chand Talsdad had gone to London that morning with the body of Kassim Bardai, preparatory to sending it to India for burial. It was the old Hindu's intention to return in time to be present at the inquest.

Lona's disappearance cast an added gloom over the atmosphere at Twin Turrets. Max alone was unaffected.

"Oh, I daresay she'll turn up in a day or two," he remarked easily. "More than likely she has run up to London to meet this old priest and pay the last rites to her brother's memory."

Borrowdean surveyed him coldly. "What! Go

up to London hatless?" More than ever Max's unconcern roused his resentment.

Max smiled with lazy insolence. "My dear fellow, won't your insularity permit you to remember that Oriental maidens are not so bound down to hats as your own countrywomen are?"

Miss Egerton, meanwhile, had notified the nearest coast-guard station and a thorough search of the cliffs and sand was being carried on. Up to dinner-time no trace of the missing girl had been reported. But a discovery made at the commencement of the meal increased the general apprehension that the young Hindu girl had not simply wandered off of her own free will.

On the plate set before Lona's empty chair lay another bullet of salt. Max, this time, was not favoured in like manner. This second warning or threat had been intended for the girl alone. Ahmed, as before, denied all knowledge of the salt signal and Mrs. Dalrymple, too, when questioned, made denial, but she betrayed agitation at sight of the white bullet. Evidently she knew its portent.

Borrowdean felt assured now that Lona had either been driven to seek death as a solution to the problems that beset her or else had been forcibly carried off.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CURTAIN RISES

THE day set for the inquest arrived, and still no trace of Lona. When the storm had subsided the coast-guards had dragged the sea within a radius of five miles of Twin Turrets but, if the young Hindu girl were within its waters, the sea would not yield her up. The entire moorside, too, had been searched without avail. A wire had been sent to Chand Talsdad in London. He, it seemed, knew nothing of Lona, but offered a fabulous reward for information concerning her whereabouts. "She must be found," his telegram had ended.

However, the fact remained that she had not been found up to the time when it was necessary to set out for the Bay Town—the little fishing village on Robin Hood's Bay—where the inquest was to be held. Borrowdean's apprehensions as to the outcome of the inquest grew as the wagonette wound among the steep narrow streets of the old town, famed as a former haven for smugglers. But Berenice, the object of his apprehensions, apparently did not share them. There was a vivacity about her—a trifle feverish perhaps—which drew upon her disapproving glances from Miss Egerton and she showed an interest so intense as to be rather peculiar in the

queer, tall houses so closely wedged together and built down to the water's edge, practically into and on top of one another, thus giving the whole town a consciously guilty air as though it were endeavouring to conceal itself. Curious passages and little courts like culs-de-sac intersected the huddled houses and must have afforded the smugglers of other days excellent means of escape from pursuing excise officers. It would be as impossible to trace a fugitive through this labyrinth of intricate little passages as to chase a rabbit in a warren.

Berenice was studying with especial intentness the old houses near the water's edge. They were almost identical in appearance; their dark stone walls enlivened by newly-painted doors and windows, their doorsteps brightened by ochre-coloured hearthstones, the scrapers sleek with black lead, and the windows shaded with spotlessly clean curtains. At the sound of the cobs' hoof-beats in the quiet little street, one of these immaculate curtains was slightly drawn aside and Borrowdean caught a vague, momentary glimpse of a man's face peering out. In an instant the curtain was drawn to.

Something impelled Borrowdean to glance at Berenice. She was staring up at that window; her brows were contracted, her lips pinched, her whole expression bitter.

Max, too, was observing her with a cynical smile. "Jolly queer houses along here, Berenice," an odd intonation in his voice.

Berenice's features relaxed. She smiled lightly. "Immensely interesting, I think. I should like to go through some of them."

Borrowdean, without knowing exactly why he did so, made a mental note of this particular house which had held Berenice's attention. He had occasion later to be thankful that he had done so. It was the last house but one upon the sea-wall. As it was built almost on top of its neighbours and towered two stories above them, the windows must have afforded an uninterrupted view of the entire sweep of Robin Hood's Bay. Borrowdean had no further time for observation. The wagonette stopped before the small inn built on a bastion against which the waves were breaking hungrily.

Max, never to be outdone in little gallantries, sprang from the wagonette and, with a filial deference, assisted his aunt to descend. Miss Egerton, dignified and severe, in austere black, unbent a little at Max's attentions and looked at him with eyes of pride and affection as he stood before her, handsome, debonair, and faultlessly dressed.

"Just one thing, Max," she said in a softened voice, "do be serious at the inquest and don't mock at the coroner even if you do think him stupid."

A whimsically tender smile played about Max's mobile mouth. "My blessed Aunt, I promise to be on my very best behaviour."

His eyes, however, were full of teasing mirth and Miss Egerton looked a little dubious as she took his

arm and let him lead her into the inn. Borrowdean followed with Berenice and Ethelyn. The two latter were obviously dressed with a view to the impression they should make. Berenice wore a golden-brown summer silk, the waist cut in a V to disclose her full white throat and neck, a smart Paris hat of the same golden-brown shade, dainty gloves and bronze high-heeled shoes. Under one arm she carried the inevitable Pompon, his absurd little body surmounted by a monstrous golden-brown bow. The ensemble of Berenice's costume with its harmony of burnished gold set off her brunette beauty to particular advantage. Ethelyn, too, had counted upon uniformity of colouring to lend charm to her own appearance, but the blue she had selected was of too vivid a shade and the contrast between this and the brightness of her hair was harsh and unpleasing. Her eyes also, sharply blue, heightened the severity of the contrast and in no way blended with her costume, made in the extreme of fashion as all Miss Roydon's clothes were.

Berenice, on the contrary, though always following strictly the prevailing modes, never went in advance of them and her gowns invariably expressed individuality, were graceful, becoming, and comfortable to her type. Ethelyn, during the entire drive to the Bay Town had been painfully aware of Berenice's superiority of taste and of Max's admiring consciousness of this fact. Consequently the glances Ethelyn bent on Berenice were appraising and un-

friendly. They did not, however, disturb Berenice in the least—Borrowdean thought it doubtful if she even noticed them—there was nothing petty about her and she would not think it worth while to notice envy.

As Borrowdean, silk hat in one hand and Malacca stick in the other, ushered them ceremoniously into the inn parlour where the inquest was to be conducted, Berenice caught Ethelyn's arm in her friendly, intimate way.

"I do hope Pompon will behave himself," she said with a nervous laugh.

Ethelyn twitched away. "Why did you bring the little beast?"

A shadow settled over Berenice's face. "I thought poor Pompon might divert my thoughts a little."

Ethelyn looked at her sharply. "Do they need diversion so badly?"

Berenice returned Ethelyn's look steadily, but she did not reply. In silence they followed an usher through the crowded parlour, packed with the usual incongruous gathering upon such occasions, gentry from the neighbouring estates, sensation-seekers from the cities, journalists and gaping country folk, to where chairs had been reserved for them immediately in front of a long table littered with writing-materials and bundles of varying size tied up with pink tape. The coroner was already seated at this table; on each side of it were a half dozen shabbily-upholstered

chairs of early-Victorian design. Toward these a dozen men, representing as many professions and walks in life, were pompously making their way. Borrowdean surveyed them without enthusiasm—some intelligent-looking, some obstinate, even surly, some eager, others bored, and still others merely stupid. These were the men who were to decide to-day how Kassim Bardai, a prince of far off India, had come to his death.

Involuntarily Borrowdean took Berenice's arm with a protective gesture as he handed her into a chair beside Miss Egerton. With punctilious politeness he would have had Ethelyn follow her but Berenice decreed that he himself should sit next to her.

"Ethie will like to sit with Max," she said in excuse.

Miss Roydon had the grace to give a slight nod of appreciation, but Max looked positively ill-natured when he found himself relegated to the end chair with two persons interposed between himself and Berenice. Miss Egerton glanced scathingly at Pompon huddled in his mistress's lap and looking up at her with plaintive, wondering eyes.

"If that ridiculous dog should commence to bark—"

"Oh, but he's too tiny really to bark. He never does more than yelp." Berenice's tone was innocence itself, but there was a faint twinkle in her eye. "If he yelps too badly, I will ask Reggie to carry him out."

Borrowdean flushed uncomfortably. Sensitive as he was to ridicule, the notion of pushing his way through the crowded room with an absurd, yelping little dog in his arms, made him writhe inwardly. Why, indeed, had Berenice insisted upon bringing the silly little creature? Miss Egerton stiffened with disapproval and drew as far away as possible from the unappreciated Pompon. Berenice's levity at such a time grated upon her sense of propriety. Could she not realize the serious position in which she stood through the discovery of a fragment of her dress in the hand of the man whose death was about to be investigated—or the still more serious position in which she was likely to stand when the inquest was over?

But Berenice's levity was as fleeting as it was ill-timed. After all, it was nothing more than the pitiful effort of a naturally joyous and healthy soul to shake off the burden of bitterness and horror that oppressed it. She threw a hasty, but embracing glance about the improvised courtroom, and instantly the amused sparkle died from her eyes and lines of anxiety settled over her features.

Borrowdean, following her glance, discovered that the venerable Hindu, Chand Talsdad, was seated on their left and was scrutinizing Berenice with an expression of merciless hatred on his harsh old face. Borrowdean's indignation rose and his own expression as he stared at the Hindu was fairly ferocious for a man of his easy good-humour.

Berenice touched his arm. "Don't look so savage, Reggie. That old man can hardly help hating me. You see"—with a sigh—"he blames me for Kassim Bardai's death. He knows Prince Kassim rather—well rather lost his head over me and everybody, I warn you, Reggie, is not as charitable as you are."

"Confound the old chap!" muttered Borrowdean uneasily. "Why couldn't the precious pair have stayed in India?"

"Well, I am sure I wish they had," said Berenice fervently.

The whisperings in that packed little parlour rose now and then to loud murmurs in spite of the usher's rappings for silence. There were many familiar faces in that heterogeneous assembly and Borrowdean found himself resenting the offhand manner in which the men bowed to Berenice and the cool, supercilious nods of the women. The newspapers, he knew, had been hinting rather broad things against her and of course these society puppets, only too avid for a breath of scandal, or worse, in connection with the beautiful divorcee who had always frankly and openly scorned trivial conventionalities, had mentally tried and condemned her. If Berenice was aware of their hostile attitude, no trace of it showed in the persistently smiling countenance with which she greeted acquaintances. But when she thought herself unobserved, she dropped the

mask and her face was that of a weary and despairing woman.

Borrowdean caught sight of Morna Dalrymple seated near the door. She was dressed in unrelieved black which, of course, accentuated her extreme pallor, but offered an effective setting to her curious copper-colored hair and eyes. She was watching Berenice in an unfriendly, almost fear-some way. Several times at Twin Turrets Borrowdean had observed Mrs. Dalrymple watching Berenice in this same fashion and he was at a loss to account for it. Surely generous-hearted, laughter-loving Berenice was the last person in the world to inspire fear. Yet there was undoubted fear in Mrs. Dalrymple's eyes turned upon her. The mystery of this enigmatic woman was again beginning to irritate him and the sympathy which the sound of her agonized sobbing had called forth was becoming blunted.

Ahmed, like Chand Talsdad, a strange, unreal figure in Eastern garb, stood over her chair, his lean arms folded across his breast and his brown face under the bright-hued turban singularly alert to every movement and every person in the room. At that moment the back of Chand Talsdad's powerful, grizzled head was the focus of the butler's attention and there was awe, reverence, and a kind of cringing fear in his restless black eyes. He stooped suddenly and addressed Mrs. Dalrymple in a furtive whisper. She replied in the same man-

ner. Seeing this, the conviction Borrowdean had long held that there was some bond, some secret understanding between the housekeeper and the Hindu butler became strengthened. It seemed to him that it might very well date back to the murder of their former master, Sir Robert Grainger. He distrusted them both.

Borrowdean had no opportunity for further surmises. The usher rapped again for silence and the physician who had been summoned on the night of Kassim Bardai's death was called to the stand. In the hush of expectation that ensued while the physician somewhat impatiently pushed his way through the compact crowd of spectators, the waves beating against the bastion outside sounded abnormally loud and menacing and brought to Borrowdean a disturbing memory which he could not rid his mind of—the memory of Lona as he had last seen her standing hopelessly on the edge of a scaur staring into a wild and ravenous sea. What fate had befallen her? An even crueller one perhaps than that which had overtaken her brother? Those threatening messages in the shape of bullets of salt would seem to indicate this unless—the sea had saved her.

The physician now had reached the witness-table. The spectators craned their necks eagerly. No need now to cry "Silence!" The curtain was about to go up on the first act of an absorbing play in which, they had no doubt, the beautiful woman in

golden-brown, fondling an absurd little Pomeranian, would play no small part. Not a word must be lost, not even dry medical terms.

As the coroner put the first question to the physician, Berenice drew a convulsive breath. Then she straightened in the chair as though bracing herself for what was to come.

CHAPTER XX

THE INQUEST

THE physician, who was also medical officer of the North Riding and had performed the post-mortem examination, gave his testimony at great length as to the cause of death. Technical terms were used in plenty and puzzled the elegant folk who had come to be entertained. In brief, the testimony amounted to this:

Kassim Bardai had come to his death by a thrust through the breast, effected by means of a long, narrow instrument with two sharp edges, such as a dagger or stiletto. This instrument had entered the thorax between the third and fourth ribs to the left of the sternum and had penetrated the left ventricle of the heart. Death must have been practically instantaneous. As regarded the nature of the wound, the possibility of suicide might be considered. But the fact that the instrument of death had been withdrawn from the wound and found on the floor by the dead man's side would seem to argue against the theory of suicide. For since the wound was such as to cause almost instant death from shock, it was hardly likely that the dying man could have had the time or the requisite strength to draw out the weapon from so deep a cut.

The coroner was about to dismiss the physician, when the latter asked if he might state a fact which appeared to him relevant to the inquiry and, in any event, was a striking coincidence.

"A little over a year ago I performed a post-mortem examination on the body of Sir Robert Granger, who was also found dead in the library at Twin Turrets. Sir Robert, too, had met his death by a thrust through the breast made by a dagger or stiletto."

There was a little stir at the back of the parlour. Mrs Dalrymple seemed to be faint and a glass of water was brought her. When quiet had been restored, the coroner turned again to the physician and asked in his deliberate, emotionless voice:

"You wish us to understand, Dr. Blair, that you see or suspect connection between these two deaths because of certain similar features in both?"

The medical officer hesitated. "I don't want to commit myself too far, but—well, yes, it is my personal opinion that there is connection between the two deaths. Of course," he added slowly, "some of the sensational elements, present in the earlier—er—death were absent in the one now being inquired into. I refer to the highly melodramatic sentence printed in red ink on a strip of paper pasted on the wall above the body of Sir Robert. I cannot now recall the exact wording, but it was to the effect that Sir Robert's death was due to his having incurred the enmity of some association or blackhand soci-

ety called the Azra El Kab—or some such weird name.”

The coroner consulted his notes. “The Azra El Kab is the name of the colossal ruby reported to have been stolen from Prince Kassim Bardai either directly before or directly after his death. I think it well, Dr. Blair, that you have called attention to this fact. Now, if I remember rightly, it was a poisoned dagger with which Sir Robert was slain. Is the same true in the case of Kassim Bardai?”

“It is not. Chemical analysis has failed to reveal any trace of poison either on the blade of the dagger or in the wound itself.”

The coroner was again about to dismiss the physician, but Dr. Blair clearly had something further to say.

“Mr. Coroner, at the risk perhaps of harking back too much to the past, I should like to bring out a little point which was hardly more than touched on at the inquest on Sir Robert’s death. It may, or it may not, shed light on the present inquiry.”

The audience was alert at once. Borrowdean, glancing back, saw that Mrs. Dalrymple was leaning forward tensely in her chair and that Ahmed had shifted his curious, cringing gaze from Chand Talsdad to the physician.

“Kindly proceed, Doctor,” the coroner said.

“The poison on the dagger which killed Sir Robert,” the doctor began, “was discovered by analysis to be a little known, but very deadly, Hindu poison.

The dagger itself was usually carried by Sir Robert on his person as a protection against some enemy or enemies of whom he was always in fear. I was Sir Robert's physician and I know that this fear dated from the time of his return from India where he had spent several years—I cannot say how—but he had learned many Eastern secrets, among them how to distill poison from an apparently harmless flower of India. The blade of his dagger had been dipped in this poison."

The coroner viewed the physician with interest. "But if Sir Robert, as you state, died from the thrust of his own dagger which he himself had dipped in poison, does not this suggest suicide?"

Dr. Blair shook his head emphatically. "Not at all. While Sir Robert's wound from its nature might have been self-inflicted, he was not in the least a man who could have taken his own life under any circumstances whatsoever. As a matter of fact, he had a horror and a fear of death which amounted almost to a mania. But it always seemed to me that there was reason for this obsession—as though he might at some time have committed a deed because of which he rightly feared to meet the judgment of his Maker. He was a hard, bitter, self-centred man and was never known to show affection or even consideration to any human being, as far as I have heard, except to his ward, the young Hindu girl, Lona, who has turned out to be the sister of Kassim Bardai. To her, I believe, he was invariably kind."

The coroner considered a moment, "You have then no other cause for supposing connection between these two deaths except that in the former there were Hindu features or elements and that in the latter the victim himself was a Hindu and died by a Hindu dagger?"

The physician nodded. "That is so."

The next witness called was Miss Egerton. Borrowdean, who had been fairly easy in his mind during the medical testimony, commenced to feel a sense of disquiet for he knew that the questions asked now would be of a personal character and would tend to enlarge and emphasize any little incident which could have even the most remote bearing on Kassim Bardai's death. Miss Egerton was not in sympathy with Berenice and so could hardly be expected to shield her by glossing over her rather extraordinary conduct on the night of the costume ball: namely, her long and unsatisfactorily explained absence.

The coroner, however, got little enough out of Miss Egerton. As a well-born, well-bred English woman she very properly resented the notoriety thrust upon her by being summoned to testify as to her knowledge of a vulgar, sordid murder, and she meant that the coroner and all concerned should feel the weight of her displeasure. She made it plain too, that the man who had brought all this notoriety upon her by allowing himself to be killed in the house she had rented shared her displeasure to no small degree, and she laid stress upon Kassim Bardai's efforts to

induce her to surrender the lease in his favour. But, in regard to the events directly preceding his death she was—for the coroner—provokingly uncommunicative. The matter of the library door being locked or unlocked, with or without a key, she refused to discuss, summarily dismissing the whole question as the figment of imagination or hysteria. She did, however, condescend to state that the terrace door had been found open in spite of the fact that she herself had locked it and retained the key in her possession before the commencement of the ball. The library that evening had not been prepared for guests, “and,” she added severely, “had her guests confined themselves to the rooms laid open for them, this unfortunate tragedy might not have occurred.”

Here Burton, whom Borrowdean had not observed before, stepped up to the table and handed the coroner a card. That official read it slowly, then turned again to Miss Egerton, standing stiff and staight before him—she had declined a chair.

“The guests, I suppose, were coming and going between the ballroom and the terrace?”

“I suppose they were.” Miss Egerton’s tone was sharp. “Dancers do not ordinarily remain in a heated ballroom the entire evening.”

The coroner looked apologetic. Miss Egerton was a little formidable. His sense of official duty, however, would not admit of his being long intimidated and he pressed another question upon her.

"Was any other guest or guests, with the exception of Prince Kassim Bardai, absent a markedly long time from the ballroom?"

Borrowdean felt himself grow cold. It was coming—what he had dreaded. Berenice ceased abruptly to fondle Pompon—which she had been nervously doing from the moment Miss Egerton took the stand—and fixed her eyes with a sort of resigned despair upon the coroner. Ethelyn flashed a significant glance at her and Max's careless serenity of expression became slightly troubled.

The coroner's question appeared to increase Miss Egerton's indignation over the position into which she had been forced. She settled her eyeglasses with a belligerent air and viewed the coroner scathingly.

"I suppose you hope for an answer that can be twisted into incriminating evidence?"

The coroner bristled in defence of his official dignity. "I expect a frank answer, Miss Egerton."

Miss Egerton set her lips. "I think the question an unfair one and I shall not answer it."

Berenice drew a little fluttering sigh of relief. Borrowdean felt profoundly grateful to Miss Egerton, but the coroner was angry and showed it.

"Perhaps you are not aware, madam, that your refusal to answer will incline the jury to believe either that you have something to conceal or somebody to shield."

The grim set to Miss Egerton's mouth became

more pronounced. "The jury will believe what they choose, but *I* believe that there would be more progress made in this investigation if there were fewer deliberately incriminating questions asked and more attention devoted to solving certain palpable mysteries which apparently are beyond the comprehension of Scotland Yard. I am referring to the disappearance of a paper in cypher which was of paramount importance to the sister of Kassim Bardai and to Mrs. Dalrymple, the housekeeper at Twin Turrets, and also to the disappearance of Lona Bardai herself. So far as I know, nothing has been accomplished in either direction. Act, not theorize, seems to me an excellent principle."

The coroner gasped. A wave of amused laughter swept through the room—an echo of that secret element of lawlessness in mankind which rejoices when those in authority are rebuked or derided. While the usher was peremptorily calling for order, Miss Egerton swept stiffly to her seat. The coroner, to hide his anger and confusion, hastily summoned the next witness.

This was Chand Talsdad. As the aged Hindu, stalwart and upright in spite of his years, dignified, even majestic in his priestly garb of turban and flowing robe, which seemed to set him apart from, to raise him above commoner personalities, faced that eager gathering, alien to him and his, and consequently unsympathetic, if not actually hostile, Borrowdean was conscious of a sense of strength

and power and resolution unconquerable emanating from the calm, stately figure of Brahma's priest. Empires would sooner totter than Chand Talsdad abandon a set purpose. He could be inexorable, pitiless, too, if that purpose were thwarted—the harsh, grim lines of his countenance, the stern, farseeing, impersonal light in his eyes declared this. He looked beyond men and their petty deeds to great results, vast enterprises which had their root in the past, their growth in the present, and their fruitage in the future. Kassim Bardai had been a part of these enterprises, an aid to their achievement. It was not likely that Chand Talsdad would show mercy to the one who had removed, or whom he suspected had removed, this integral link in the chain of his purpose. That Berenice was the object of his suspicion there seemed no doubt, for, out of that whole roomful of men and women the Hindu's stern gaze sought out Berenice and rested upon her with concentrated hatred.

Borrowdean felt Berenice shiver. His resentment against Chand Talsdad kindled to a flame. By what right did this man judge and condemn her without a hearing?

Ethelyn gave Borrowdean a little nudge. "Reggie, don't scowl so, you're attracting attention."

Borrowdean made an effort to control his features as he listened to Chand Talsdad's reserved testimony which the coroner drew from him with some difficulty and by dint of much questioning. The

Hindu declined to state the nature of the business which had brought him and Kassim Bardai to England and had caused the latter to make such persistent efforts to obtain the lease of Twin Turrets, he intimated only that it was a purely private affair. When asked if they had been in England in June of the preceding year—June was the month in which Sir Robert Grainger had met his death—Chand Talsdad answered that he had never set foot outside of India until six months ago.

“But was Prince Kassim Bardai in England in June of last year?” persisted the coroner.

“That I cannot say,” was Chand Talsdad’s somewhat ambiguous reply.

As the coroner finally narrowed his questions to the period directly preceding the costume ball, the Hindu’s replies became lengthier. It appeared that Kassim Bardai had gone to the ball against the advice of Chand Talsdad. The old Hindu named no names, but it was plainly to be gathered from his words that he disapproved and had sought to prevent Kassim Bardai’s growing intimacy with a certain member of the house party at Twin Turrets.

It seemed to Borrowdean, hypersensitive to any allusion, however covert, to Berenice, that everyone in the little courtroom must know to whom Chand Talsdad was referring. Every chance look cast at her appeared to him deliberate and accusing. Perhaps Berenice felt the same, for she kept

her head slightly lowered and her attention on Pompon, fawning against her. As Borrowdean stole a glance at her and saw the misery in her eyes and the nervous, agitated, persistently engrossed manner in which she fondled the Pomperanian, he understood better why she had brought the absurd little creature.

Chand Talsdad concluded his testimony by solemnly exhorting English justice in the person of the coroner to leave no effort untried to discover the person who had stolen the Azra El Kab ruby and the whereabouts of Lona Bardai. Either he believed that the solution of these two minor mysteries would solve the greater mystery of Kassim Bardai's death or else he felt that Kassim Bardai, being dead and hence unable to further the undertaking which had brought the two Hindus to England, had become a nonentity, a thing without rating, and that in some way the reappearance of the ruby and of Lona—if the girl still were alive—would complete that chain of purpose broken by Kassim Bardai's death. Borrowdean guessed that the vengeance of a man who valued causes and effects above the lives of his fellow humans would be unremitting and pitiless, and he was obsessed by a primitive, protective impulse to snatch up Berenice and bear her away from even the shadow of the Hindu's suspicions. It was a relief to him when Chand Talsdad resumed his seat.

As the name of the next witness was called Berenice

sat up tensely. Morna Dalrymple made her way to the witness-stand with nervous haste, obviously and wretchedly conscious of the battery of curious and appraising eyes bent upon her. This woman knew well what she must endure—only one year ago she had stood up under the fire of cross-examination and had struggled to evade insinuating and incriminating questions which later had caused her name and her reputation to be bandied about as common talk.

Borrowdean again felt sympathy for Mrs. Dalrymple as she stood there so strikingly pale in her unrelieved black frock, steeling herself to composure, but unable to banish the fear in her eyes. Once she glanced furtively, almost pleadingly, at Berenice. Berenice responded by a slight, but encouraging smile which made her own face very gentle and sympathetic. It was just a flash, a brief message of womanly sympathy, but it brought a faint glow to Morna Dalrymple's cheeks and lessened the fear in her eyes. With an increase of composure she answered in her soft voice with its persistent undertone of sadness, the coroner's searching questions concerning her reasons for staying on at Twin Turrets after the violent death of its late owner.

She had fought against these insinuations before, but she did not lose her temper as she stated that she had remained out of deference to a clause in Sir Robert's will which had expressed his desire that she and Ahmed the butler remain indefinitely as caretakers in the event of his death.

"You had then no more urgent or more personal motive for remaining than deference to Sir Robert's wishes?"

"No." Mrs. Dalrymple spoke calmly, but she looked a little anxious as though distrusting the intent of this question.

The coroner pressed his attack. "Do I understand rightly that Sir Robert in his will made no further provision for you than to establish you as permanent housekeeper—or caretaker?"

There came a bitterness into Morna Dalrymple's eyes. "That was all the provision made for me."

The coroner leaned forward aggressively. "Had you reason to expect that Sir Robert would make further provision for you?"

At this Mrs. Dalrymple became so agitated that her lips moved rapidly without framing an intelligible word. She clenched and unclenched her hands; patches of red came swiftly into her cheeks and disappeared as swiftly. Realizing what effect was registering on the faces of the jurors, she quickly regained her power of speech.

"Why—why, no. I always received my wages as housekeeper with due regularity; there was nothing more to expect."

"Then your willingness to follow out Sir Robert's wishes and remain as caretaker had nothing to do with any expectations you might have cherished—expectations which you thought might be realized

through the discovery of that paper in cypher cunningly hidden in a Hindu idol and which you laid claim to as your 'right'?"

"No. Certainly not." But the question plainly had startled, had dismayed her.

The coroner continued his aggressive methods. "But you knew of the existence of this paper, who had hidden it, and why?"

"Yes!" There was passion in the single monosyllable.

"And you made a systematic search for this paper, did you not?"

Mrs. Dalrymple hesitated and moistened her lips. In the pause Borrowdean glanced toward Chand Talsdad. The East Indian was staring at Mrs. Dalrymple with something of that concentration of hate with which he had stared at Berenice.

The coroner trenchantly added to his question. "Your search for this paper was so thorough that you mutilated several Hindu idols in your endeavours to locate it—is this not true?"

Mrs. Dalrymple trembled with repressed passion. "It is true to a certain extent. I did mutilate some of the idols found broken, but not all. There were others interested in the discovery of that paper. For instance, it was not I who bored the hole found in the large statue of Brahma."

"Who was it then?"

Mrs. Dalrymple clenched her hands again. "I only wish I knew!"

Her sincerity could not be doubted. The coroner slightly varied his attack.

"Who were the 'others' interested in the discovery of that paper?"

"Lona Bardai was one." Mrs. Dalrymple's voice was hostile.

"And Prince Kassim Bardai?"

"Probably more so than his sister."

"You were acquainted with Prince Kassim Bardai?"

"Not in the least. A woman in my position does not have princes for acquaintances—but I knew of him."

"Did he ever visit Twin Turrets during the lifetime of Sir Robert?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Would you have been likely to know if he had?"

"Not unless I had happened to see him. Sir Robert was not confidential with me." Mrs. Dalrymple's tone was hard.

The coroner once more veered his questioning. "Will you state who concealed that paper in cypher?"

"Sir Robert Grainger concealed it."

"It was his then to dispose of in this way if he wished?"

"It was his; he could do as he wished with it—and did," a world of bitterness in the words.

"Then, Mrs. Dalrymple," the coroner snapped

back, "what did you mean by claiming this paper as your 'legal right'?"

Mrs. Dalrymple started. An expression of consternation spread over her face. "I—I do not care to explain."

"I understand that you offered to do so on the night of the discovery and disappearance of this paper."

Mrs. Dalrymple succeeded in recovering her poise. "For the sake of possessing that paper, I should have been willing to explain. Now that it has gone, I am not willing."

"Are you willing to state what you expected that paper to contain?"

"No." The single word was emphatic.

Borrowdean remembered Lona's similar uncommunicativeness in regard to the paper and his curiosity grew.

The coroner allowed the matter of the paper to rest. "Did you have conversation with Prince Kassim Bardai on the night of his death?"

"I have never spoken with Prince Kassim Bardai," sharply.

"Where were you during the course of the ball?"

"The early part of the evening I spent on the cliffs; by eleven o'clock I was in bed," she answered readily—almost too readily.

"Were you alone on the cliffs?"

Morna Dalrymple flashed a peculiar glance at

Berenice, hesitated an appreciable while, then answered hurriedly:

"I was alone."

Burton passed another card to the coroner. Borrowdean was commencing to dread these cards and he was not surprised at the trend of the coroner's next question.

"Did you see any guest from the costume ball on the cliffs?"

Mrs. Dalrymple studied this question before replying. "I saw no one from the costume ball," she said at length.

The coroner frowningly bent over his notes. Suddenly he sat upright and launched a shot that caused a tremor of excitement to pervade the room.

"Then if the man in the feathered hat and the cavalier dress who talked with you on the cliffs that night was not a guest from the costume ball—*who was he?*"

Mrs. Dalrymple uttered a smothered cry; her face was like chalk. Her lips opened, but no words came. Berenice pressed against Borrowdean. He felt the trembling of her body, saw the horror in her eyes.

"Mrs. Dalrymple, who was the man in the cavalier dress?" thundered the coroner.

There was no response. Morna Dalrymple had fainted in her chair.

Berenice precipitated Pompon into Miss Egerton's lap and went hastily to Mrs. Dalrymple's aid.

Max leaned across Ethelyn. His boyish, debonair look was gone.

“I say, Reggie, if they get you on the stand, it will be just as well under the circumstances—as I told you before—not to proclaim the fact that I got myself up as the Red Cavalier. I was a bally ass to do it.”

CHAPTER XXI

A QUESTION OF COSTUME

A DOSE of sal-volatile restored Mrs. Dalrymple to consciousness and she was assisted from the room by Berenice and Ahmed, the latter solicitous and deferential. The butler was immediately summoned to the witness-stand, but Berenice remained outside with Mrs. Dalrymple. Borrowdean was rather glad that it happened so. Berenice would be spared the recital of much unpleasant testimony and would be free, for a while at least, from impertinent stares. Miss Egerton resigned herself to Pompon, Max resumed his usual careless serenity of expression, and the courtroom generally quieted down and prepared itself to listen to Ahmed's reluctant and circumspect testimony.

That the East Indian, figuratively speaking, was on the rack there could be no doubt. Hitherto Ahmed's understanding and command of English had been perfect, but now it was necessary for the coroner to repeat his questions several times before they entered the Hindu's comprehension sufficiently to draw from him even the most monosyllabic response. Borrowdean fancied that the hard, searching gaze which Chand Talsdad directed upon his un-

happy compatriot as though he sought to probe the secret depths of his soul, was responsible in no small degree for the pitiful showing which the perfectly-trained and efficient servant made on the witness-stand. Borrowdean dreaded the moment when Berenice must undergo the same scrutiny.

The coroner with admirable patience finally elicited from Ahmed a denial that he had had anything to do with the mutilation of the idols or the subsequent disappearance of the paper in cypher.

"I know nothing of anything, Sahib," the butler declared in his smooth, liquid voice.

"But you know," urged the coroner persuasively, "whether you ever admitted Prince Kassim Bardai to Twin Turrets during the lifetime of Sir Robert Grainger."

Ahmed's restless black eyes were suddenly lowered. "It is not so, Sahib, I have never admitted Prince Kassim Bardai to Grainger Sahib."

Borrowdean wondered if the fellow was lying, but the coroner was content to let the matter rest. He next forced the unwilling admission from Ahmed that it was he on the night of the costume ball who had called Miss Egerton's attention to the fact that the library door was locked. But he could not explain how it was that Miss Egerton had found the door unlocked, nor how the key later had been discovered in the lock.

"What drew your attention to the library in the first place?" demanded the coroner.

Two repetitions of this question were necessary to elicit the reply that the door being closed had attracted his attention.

"Did you hear any sounds of moving about or disturbance within?"

"No sounds, Sahib." Ahmed seemed anxious to make this statement.

"Had you previously seen any person enter the library?"

"No, Sahib." Ahmed's answers came more quickly now.

"Did you see any person leave the library before you notified Miss Egerton?"

"No, Sahib," with greater haste, but so low as to be almost inaudible.

The coroner surveyed the Hindu thoughtfully. "Do you know if any person entered Twin Turrets that night who was not an invited guest?"

Ahmed was shaken by the question. Again the coroner was forced to repeat. The Hindu's response struck Borrowdean disagreeably.

"About ten o'clock, Sahib, a man came to the entrance door and asked that I would carry a note to Lady Berenice Coningsby."

It was the first specific mention of Berenice's name and Borrowdean felt a weight settling on him. Burton, with eager haste and something of the hunter's look, commenced to scribble on another card.

"What was this man's appearance—how was he dressed?" asked the coroner.

"Like you, Sahib—dressed like any European."

"He did not then wear a hat with feathers and a queer fancy costume, red and tied up with ribbons?"

The audience leaned forward expectantly. They had all heard of the picturesque robber of the North Riding and they could guess what was in the coroner's mind. The question had startled Ahmed. He looked the embodiment of consternation.

"No, Sahib, no! The man was not in costume dress. He had the European clothes, but he was like what Grainger Sahib called a bloodsucking Jew."

The coroner frowned at the wave of laughter through the room. Burton finished his hasty scribbling and thrust the card upon the coroner.

That official gave him an impatient glance, but proceeded to ask the question on the card.

"When you gave the note to Lady Berenice Coningsby what happened?"

The change in the trend of the examination seemed to afford Ahmed relief. He answered glibly that her ladyship had left the ballroom and gone outdoors to join the man.

"Did you see her ladyship reenter the house?"

"Yes, Sahib, about half an hour later when I was passing through the hall, her ladyship came in alone."

Borrowdean started. Only *half an hour* later! But Berenice had been absent from the ballroom fully three hours.

"Did her ladyship return directly to the ballroom?" asked the coroner, still reading from the card.

Ahmed hesitated a moment. Then, "No, Sahib."
"Where did she go?"

Another pause. Ahmed was evidently the prey of some mental struggle. "Prince Kassim Bardai, Sahib," he said reluctantly, "spoke to her ladyship in the hall."

The coroner showed interest as intense as that of the spectators. The next question was put at his own initiative.

"Did Prince Kassim and her ladyship remain in the hall, or where did they go?"

Ahmed looked genuinely distressed. "They walked down the hall, Sahib, toward—toward the library."

"Did they enter the library?"

"I did not see, Sahib. I carried refreshments into the ballroom."

"When did you see either of them again?"

Ahmed's tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. He cast furtive, helpless glances about the room. Pressed sternly by the coroner, he finally answered that he had not seen Prince Kassim until he had been discovered dead.

"And when did you next see her ladyship?"

"I saw her, Sahib, a few minutes before I went into the ballroom to tell the Mem Sahib that the library door was locked. I saw her ladyship come in from outdoors with the Mem Sahib's nephew."

"You are sure they did not come from the library?"

"They came from outdoors, Sahib."

"Was this outer door kept open during the ball?"

"Yes, Sahib, two footmen were watching it."

"Then no stranger—no unbidden guest—could have entered without being observed?"

"No, Sahib." Ahmed was beginning to look terrified again.

"And neither you, nor any of the servants, as far as you know, saw in the house or about the grounds a man in a feathered hat and a red, beribboned costume?"

Ahmed appeared quite desperate for a minute or two. Then suddenly he recovered his poise.

"The Mem Sahib's nephew wore a feathered hat and a red costume with ribbons."

"Confound that brown chap!" muttered Max.

There was no humour now in the lines of his mouth. Hard, bitter, almost repellant his whole face seemed—but only for a moment. To those who bent curious stares upon him, he turned an indifferent countenance and now a smile, whimsical, yet with a suggestion of cynicism, played about his lips.

Miss Egerton was indignant with Ahmed for the innuendo in his answer, but she also was indignant with Max for having given ground to it by electing to copy the costume of a notorious character such as the Red Cavalier. She conveyed this displeasure to Max by a few whispered words, caustic and sharp.

Max looked comically repentant, also reproachful. "But, Aunt Van, how the plague was I to know—"

His words were arrested by a sentence spoken by

the witness who had succeeded Ahmed. Essy Grieve was on the stand and she was telling a startling tale.

The girl's cheeks were rosier than ever with embarrassment and excitement, but her round blue eyes were steady and convincing.

"Aboot an hour after t' ball began," she was saying, "Ah seed a man on t' terrace wi' a feddered hat an a ribboned suit. Ah wor in t' library trimmin' a candle and t' man wor lookin' in at t' door."

"Did you see his face?" demanded the coroner.

"Ah didn't wait ter see it. Ah wor afeard an Ah ran oot from t' library. Ah wor sure 'e wor t'—t' Red Cavalier." She lowered her voice impressively and glanced around the room with an air of pride in the sensation she was causing.

"Did you see this man again?" asked the coroner with official sternness.

Essy looked more important than ever. "Ah seed 'im coomin' oot from t' library. Ah didn't see 'is face then either, on'y his back, but he went into t' ballroom."

"What time was this?"

"Varra late—aboot a half hour afore t' murder."

"You mean before it was discovered that there had been a murder?"

"Ay, thot's what Ah mean."

"Did this man close and lock the library door?"

"He closed it; thot's aw he did."

"And what did you do? Did you attempt to look into the library?"

"Ah ran into t' servants' hall. Ah wor frettened."

"Then you don't know who locked the library door and later unlocked it in the short interval between Ahmed's discovery that it was locked and his informing Miss Egerton of this fact?"

"Noa, sur. Ah stayed in t' servants' hall till John—he's yan o' t' footmen—cam cryin' theer wor murder done."

The next information elicited from Essy was that which Borrowdean had long been dreading to hear—the repetition of her former statement that she had seen Berenice put the key in the lock.

"When was this done?" The coroner's tone was trenchant. He remembered Essy's previous evasion as to the time.

Essy again sought to elude the question, but the coroner pressed her so hard that she was finally forced to answer.

"It worn't varra long afore yo an th' doctor cam."

Borrowdean nervously adjusted his monocle and stared hard at Essy. The girl was certainly telling the truth. But Berenice! She must then have had the key in her possession and have come downstairs, after all the others had gone up, to rid herself of this incriminating evidence. Undoubtedly she had been the one who had locked the door. But why, and who had unlocked it in the interval of Ahmed's entering the ballroom? Not Berenice, for she had been standing near Miss Egerton when Ahmed approached. Borrowdean was coming to resent more and

more the significant glances directed toward Berenice's vacant chair. Yet, in spite of himself, did not he too harbour the selfsame ugly doubts which excited this morbidly curious throng?

The coroner had not quite finished with Essy. "What were you doing downstairs at that time?"

Essy's eyes grew a little rounder and she seemed slightly dismayed. "Ah wor too frettened to go oopstaares to my room an Mrs. Dalrymple axed me to coom in her room which is downstaares off t' servants' hall."

The girl hesitated as though unwilling to say any more, but the coroner forced her to continue.

"Theer cam a rap on t' door," she said somewhat sulkily. "It wor Lady Berenice; she wor nervous an oopset like. Mrs. Dalrymple went out into t' corridor wi' her an closed t' door. She wor gone a long time an Ah got afeeard—aw alone in t' room—so Ah opened t' door and theer wor Mrs. Dalrymple an Lady Berenice whusperin' afore t' library an Lady Berenice wor puttin' a key in t' lock." Essy jerked her head defiantly. "Thot's aw Ah knaw about t' key."

Borrowdean thought it sufficient. Berenice then and that woman of mystery, Morna Dalrymple, had been in collusion on the night of the murder. Now that this was manifest to every one, he wished that Berenice had not gone to Mrs. Dalrymple's aid when she had fainted; he wished, too, that Berenice would no longer remain outside with the housekeeper.

Suspicious minds would readily see more collusion in what he, who knew Berenice's generous and sympathetic nature, felt sure was only an act of kindness toward another suffering woman.

The coroner had still a last question to put to Essy Grieve. "Did you see anything further of this man in the cavalier costume after, as you stated, he entered the ballroom?"

"Noa, sur." But there was a curious hesitancy in Essy's voice.

"You seem to be doubtful on this point." The coroner spoke sharply. "Did you or did you not see him?"

"Noa, sur, Ah didn't—but Ah thought Ah did."

"Explain yourself, please."

Essy twisted about worriedly. "Wann John cried to me theer wor murder done Ah ran into th' hall—th' entrance hall, sur—an Ah saw a man wi' a feddered hat an ribboned costume joost goin' oop t' staares. But wann 'e turned—Ah'd gi'en a cry o' fret—Ah seed it worn't t'—t' Red Cavalier, sur."

"Well, who was it?" impatiently.

Essy drew a quick breath. "It wor Mr. Egerton, sur."

CHAPTER XXII

A QUESTION OF IDENTITY

MAX, with a detached air of amusement, encountered the more than curious glances bent upon him. Miss Egerton bristled in defence of her nephew and stared out of countenance those who ventured to look at him too pointedly. To herself, she had lately been forced to admit that her favourite nephew was not all perfection, but she would not admit this to another nor allow any suggestion of it.

It seemed to be the general expectation that Max would be the next witness, but instead Borrowdean was called.

He took the stand with an unwillingness and apprehension which he tried his best to conceal and succeeded in doing. In fact, he presented an impassive countenance as he stood before the crowded roomful, dressed with immaculate correctness, an expression of amiable boredom filming his eyes, and answered with the elegant drawl peculiar to his kind, the coroner's searching questions. He was, however, careful to avoid Chand Talsdad's gaze as the examination approached the danger zone: that is, events in which Berenice figured, preceding and following the death of Kassim Bardai. He felt somehow that if he

were to meet the Hindu's hard scrutiny his self-command would be shaken.

As it was he came through the inquiry without making any damaging admissions in regard to Berenice and also spoke a word in Max's favour by substantiating Essy's statement that the Red Cavalier had been in the vicinity of Twin Turrets on the night of the ball. He would no longer allow himself to believe that it was Max whom he had seen from the terrace talking with Mrs. Dalrymple.

The coroner, nevertheless, needed convincing. "You say, Lord Borrowdean, that you were on the terrace when you saw this man at the edge of the promontory. He must then have been at a considerable distance from you and it was dark in addition. How then did you know it was the Red Cavalier?"

"The moon was out and I recognized him by his costume."

"But you could not see his face?"

"No; it was too dark for that."

"How could you be sure then that this man was not Mr. Egerton? He wore a costume resembling the Cavalier's—according to the testimony of the two preceding witnesses."

Borrowdean found this question rather of a poser and he gave a lame answer. "I should suppose that Mr. Egerton would be in the ballroom instead of on the cliffs with—with a person who was not one of the guests," he finished hastily, not wishing to name Mrs. Dalrymple.

But the coroner was determined to force him to it. Borrowdean, however, was equally determined and would admit nothing except that the Cavalier's companion had been a woman not in fancy dress. The coroner listened with interest to Borrowdean's account of having seen a man in Cavalier costume on the cliffs at dawn and of having met Max in the hall in conventional morning garb only a few minutes later.

"There seems then to be two Cavaliers to account for," said the coroner with rather an unpleasant smile, as he dismissed Borrowdean.

This remark caused Borrowdean to wonder if he had really helped Max so very much after all. However, the knowledge that he had successfully diverted the questioning from Berenice was sufficient to content him. Since Max had foolishly chosen to impersonate the Cavalier, he must shield himself from the consequences.

Ethelyn was summoned next. There was something in her poise, her assured bearing—or was it the hard blue of her eyes—which gave Borrowdean a sense of uneasiness. She was jealous of Berenice and he felt that she would not be likely to withhold evidence which might discredit her. Ethelyn was not generous-hearted; the only soft spot in her nature was her infatuation for Max, but this made her bitter against any one who caught his volatile fancy and it was particularly so in the case of Berenice. For over two years now Max had pursued her

with untiring ardour—usually his passion cooled in half that time—but Berenice still remained its desired object. His trifling with poor little Lona was not to be taken seriously; she was just an amusing child, a pastime, and Ethelyn had not thought it worth while to be jealous of her. But Borrowdean knew that her jealousy of Berenice had reached fever heat and he listened in an agony of apprehension to Ethelyn's readily-given testimony.

Yes, Miss Roydon admitted coolly, she had been absent from the ballroom about an hour and a half. She had gone outdoors because she had had a headache. She had joined Lord Borrowdean on the terrace and had remained there alone after he went inside. No, she saw nothing of a man in cavalier dress nor of Mrs. Dalrymple.

“Did you see Lady Berenice Coningsby go out from the house?” asked the coroner.

The audience, whose tension had somewhat relaxed, straightened up, metaphorically and literally, at mention of Berenice.

“Lady Berenice Coningsby had left the ballroom before I went outdoors,” said Ethelyn quietly. “But, about half-past ten o'clock, I saw her reënter the house. She was alone and came from the direction of the cliffs. She appeared to be in a hurry and I thought that she was nervously upset.”

Borrowdean felt an impulse to sweep Ethelyn's *petite*, assured figure from the stand. She might at least wait for direct questions instead of voluntarily

offering testimony which she knew would discredit Berenice. Why verify till necessary Ahmed's statement that Berenice had reentered the house within a half hour after leaving it and so emphasize the fact that over two hours of her time from then until the discovery of Kassim Bardai's death was unaccounted for? Max apparently shared Borrowdean's indignation against Ethelyn, for his expression as he regarded her was almost contemptuous.

Miss Roydon, however, did not once glance his way, but looked persistently over the heads of the audience toward the outer door as though challenging Berenice to come back and defend herself. Burton was exceedingly interested in Ethelyn's testimony and proceeded to dash off another card.

The coroner's next question revealed its purport. "The terrace on which you stood extends, I believe, from the front entrance of Twin Turrets beyond the windows of the library?"

Ethelyn quickly assented. She seemed anxious for the next question. It came after a brief delay, during which the coroner studied again Burton's card.

"Did you happen to walk up and down the terrace—as far as the library windows for instance?"

"I walked several times from one end of the terrace to the other." There was in her voice a suggestion of information withheld which caused the coroner to lean toward her with eagerness.

"Did you look in at the library windows?"

"I looked in at the door." Ethelyn spoke as though regretfully, but Borrowdean, his sensibilities unusually keen, detected a false note.

"Miss Roydon," the coroner's tone though insistent was yet gentle—after all, Ethelyn was exceedingly pretty and *chic* and she had when she chose, as on the present occasion, a certain appealing way with her which most men found difficult to resist—"I must ask you to tell me frankly what you saw in the library."

Ethelyn's eyes became very regretful, her baby-like mouth quivered slightly. "I am afraid," she said with a little sigh, "that in telling you I may give an entirely wrong impression of—of what happened later."

A current of excitement ran through the room. Borrowdean was morbidly sure that Ethelyn's words were no less than an innuendo against Berenice. Max, leaning back nonchalantly in his chair, was studying Ethelyn with a sort of cynical, grudging admiration.

"Actress!" he muttered.

"Miss Roydon," urged the coroner, still gently, "it is your duty to tell all that you saw and leave the gentlemen of the jury to draw their own conclusions."

Ethelyn made a little deprecativè gesture. "It really wasn't very much. Prince Kassim Bardai was in the library with Lady Berenice."

Miss Roydon's pause was significant and lent a

dramatic touch to a statement in itself fraught with meaning.

"They were talking?" demanded the coroner.

"Talking?" Ethelyn elevated her carefully-arched brows. "Well—yes."

"Amicably?"

Ethelyn appeared somewhat distressed. The coroner looked sympathetic and even Borrowdean was not quite sure but that her distress was genuine. Max gave a kind of twisted smile. Miss Egerton sat erect and frowning. She for one was not to be influenced by Miss Roydon's ingenuous ways.

The coroner repeated his question. Ethelyn firmly interlaced her little gloved hands as though to reassure herself of the integrity of her motive in answering frankly.

"It was not at all an ordinary conversation," she said in a low, deliberate voice. "Both were greatly excited, almost quarrelling."

"How did this end, Miss Roydon?"

Ethelyn turned surprised eyes upon the coroner. "I cannot tell you. I walked away immediately."

Borrowdean felt a little bewildered. He did not believe that Ethelyn had walked away nor did he understand why she should conceal what else she had seen through the terrace door. Certainly it could not be from a desire to shield Berenice and he had it from Berenice's own lips that her interview with the Hindu had been in the highest degree un-

pleasant. There was no doubt that Ethelyn had seen more than she would tell. He remembered how white and agitated she had been upon her return to the ballroom. What had she seen and why should she conceal it? Had there been some one else in the library besides Berenice and the Hindu? Some one whom Ethelyn wished to shield? But whom would this self-seeking young woman be likely to shield except — Borrowdean stole an uneasy glance at Max.

At that moment the coroner dismissed Ethelyn and called:

“Mr. Maxwell Egerton!”

Max rose unconcernedly from his seat and walked leisurely to the centre table. All cynicism and hardness was gone from his face; once more he looked carefree, irresponsible, boyish. There was a humourous gleam in his eyes, the faint beginnings of a smile on his lips as he faced the inquisitive glances levelled on him from every side. One might have said that he was amused, even a little bored, by the entire proceedings. His chestnut head high, his slim, elegant figure carelessly erect, he stood before the crowd, the coroner and the jury as he might have stood before friends and acquaintances in the grand stand at Ascot or in the stalls of a West End theatre.

Miss Egerton bestowed on him a look of pride. “Egerton to the fingertips,” she murmured.

Ethelyn nodded. Her sharp prettiness was soft-

ened and illumined as she gazed at Max. Hard-natured little adventuress as she was, Max had known how to touch some unsuspected chord of tenderness within her, how to rouse love-hunger in a cramped and self-sufficient soul. Borrowdean found that he was beginning to envy Max his power to stir women's hearts.

The coroner now was putting certain preliminary questions which Max answered with an air of amiable condescension. Apparently he was unconscious of Chand Talsdad's fierce scrutiny. It seemed to Borrowdean that the old Hindu viewed Max with hardly less hostility than he had Berenice. What the deuce did the old chap know or suspect?

"At the fancy-dress ball," continued the coroner, "you wore the costume of the Red Cavalier?"

"I wore a representation of the Cavalier's costume." Max spoke with emphasis.

The coroner frowned. He did not like this nicety of distinction. "Was your costume a sufficiently accurate representation to allow of your being mistaken for the original cavalier?"

Max's condescension grew. "Rather a difficult question that. I have never had the pleasure of seeing the Cavalier except indistinctly from my window the night the paper in cypher was stolen and I am sure I can't tell how my costume struck others."

Max's manner irritated the coroner. "If you have never seen the Cavalier except indistinctly,"

he flashed back, "how do you know that your costume was a representation of his?"

Max smiled tolerantly. "Partly from hearsay, partly because I had it copied from an old portrait in the dining-hall at Twin Turrets said to be the original Cavalier, or rather this present-day chap is said to be the reincarnated spirit of the other."

"You take a great interest in this old legend, Mr. Egerton. *Why?*" The coroner's tone was truculent.

Max looked at him lazily. "Why not? There's an epidemic of Cavalier legends throughout the North Riding. It's the one excitement here."

The coroner showed plainly that he did not like Max's nonchalance. "At any time during the course of the ball were you out on the cliffs with Mrs. Dalrymple?"

"I spent the evening in the company of my aunt's guests. At no time was I on the cliffs with Mrs. Dalrymple." There was a certain arrogance in Max's voice and bearing which did not tend to propitiate the coroner.

"Were you out on the terrace?" he asked sharply.

"I was. The terrace was used as a promenade by many of the guests."

"Did you look in at the library door?"

"No; I did not go as far as the library door. I think that few of the guests did. The terrace forms a sharp angle just before reaching the first of the library windows. While I was on the terrace I saw

no one walk beyond that angle. To one not familiar with the house it would seem in the darkness that the terrace ended there." Max's demeanour was once more amiable and indifferent.

"So then," pursued the coroner, "those on the terrace would not be likely to know what was happening in the library unless they made it a point to do so?"

"That is correct," Max assented affably.

Borrowdean glanced at Ethelyn, who was gazing with intensity at Max. Evidently she had made it a point to know.

"Did you enter the library at any time during the evening?" The coroner's voice was increasingly harsh.

"I did not enter or approach the library until the discovery of the death there."

Max answered with some sharpness. Apparently he saw, as others did, that the coroner was endeavouring to prove that there had been only one Cavalier in the vicinity of Twin Turrets on the night of the ball, and that Cavalier Max himself.

The coroner stroked his chin thoughtfully, contemplating the witness before him. "Did you, Mr. Egerton," he asked at length, "see anything that night of another man dressed in Cavalier costume?"

Max looked at him with a frankness which somehow seemed overdone. "I didn't happen to see the other—the original—Cavalier that night, but of course he must have been about since Essy Grieve

and Lord Borrowdean too have vouched for his presence."

"But you personally saw nothing of him?"

"Nothing at all," said Max lightly.

"If he had entered the ballroom it would have caused some sensation, would it not?"

Max appeared a little puzzled. "Well, rather!"

"But you, wearing almost the identical costume could enter without sensation?"

The puzzlement in Max's eyes grew, but he responded readily enough. "Naturally; none of the guests wore masks, they would know my face and they had become accustomed to my costume."

"And yet," persisted the coroner, "if a person had seen the costume without seeing your face, that is, if you had been standing with your back to that person, he might have mistaken you for the real Cavalier?"

"Why," admitted Max with an uneasy smile, "I suppose so. My costume was a jolly good copy of the one in that old portrait."

The coroner straightened to the attack. "Did you not come out from the library, closing the door after you, about a half hour before the discovery of Prince Kassim Bardai's death?"

If Max felt the thrust, he successfully concealed it under an assumption of arrogance. "I have stated that I did not approach the library until after the discovery of the prince's death."

"A preceding witness has stated," resumed the

coroner in harsh, judicial tones, "that she saw, a half hour *before* the discovery of the prince's death, a man whom, from his costume—she did not see his face, only his back—she took to be the real Cavalier, come out from the library and enter the ballroom. Apparently his entrance caused no sensation. Now, Mr. Egerton, since your costume, according to your own statement, was an exact reproduction of the real Cavalier's and yet you could enter the ballroom without causing sensation, why should we not think that it was you yourself whom this witness saw coming out from the library?"

Max's arrogant mouth hung slack. For a moment he stood gazing at the coroner in silent consternation. Then he pulled himself together and tried to carry off the situation lightly.

"I am afraid you'll have to take my word that it wasn't I."

The coroner's smile was not pleasant. "There seems to be no choice in the matter. That will do, Mr. Egerton." He turned to the usher. "Summon Lady Berenice Coningsby."

CHAPTER XXIII

THRUST AND COUNTER

BERENICE entered the inn parlour quietly and composedly, not with Max's air of half-contemptuous nonchalance, but with the calm bearing of a woman who has steeled herself for what she must undergo and has confidence in her ability to maintain self-command. The impression she made upon coroner and jury was distinctly favourable; upon the spectators it varied according to their natures.

Miss Egerton's expression which had grown sombre and even grim during Max's examination relaxed slightly and she bestowed a dutiful pat or two on the little Pomeranian who commenced to whimper at sight of his mistress. Into Max's face, now set in lines of cynical indifference, there came an ardent light as his eyes followed Berenice's graceful figure to the witness table; yet there was present too a suggestion of that appraising look with which Max invariably regarded women. In the case of Berenice Borrowdean had always more or less resented it—in the case of other women it had not mattered to him—but now he found himself angry and the fact that Max's look was entirely approbative did not lessen his resentment.

Ethelyn stared at Berenice through narrowed lids, and it seemed to Borrowdean that the ferocity of Chand Talsdad's scrutiny was not more pitiless than Miss Roydon's cold gaze.

Out of the scores of faces turned toward her, Berenice's glance sought out Borrowdean's; he thought he read in her frank eyes the plea, "Stand by me, old friend!" He tried to convey to her by his answering glance the assurance that he intended to do so, and evidently she understood for she gave him a faint, but warm smile of gratitude.

Max observed this smile and, taking advantage of Ethelyn's critical study of Berenice, whispered to Borrowdean, "Play fair, Reggie!"

Borrowdean felt his colour mount under Max's quizzing eyes. Somehow Max's knowledge of his sentiments toward Berenice made him uncomfortable. He had a notion that Max, confident in his own powers to attract women, was making mock of his poor pretensions. But perhaps—the consoling thought came to him—with one woman, *the* woman, his pretensions were not so poor after all. It was to him Berenice turned when in trouble—Max was for her lighter hours. But yet this did not content; Borrowdean wished to be something more to Berenice than a mental prop or solace; since that walk alone with her in the storm when his passion had forced utterance he realized that friendship could never satisfy; he must take as well as give. He would recall the foolish half-promise he had made to

allow Max "free way" with Berenice. He could no longer hold to it; he must "play fair" with himself. It was as much his right to seek love as Max's—perhaps more.

A leading question put by the coroner arrested his reflections. That official had finished his preliminary questioning of Berenice and was now coming to the substance of the examination.

"Were you acquainted with Prince Kassim Bardai before you met him at Twin Turrets?"

Berenice's voice was quite steady as she gave reply. "I met Prince Kassim first at the Ascot Races in June of last year and later at the Russian Embassy ball in November, also at several other functions during the season."

The coroner looked slightly triumphant. Berenice had established what he had vainly endeavoured to make Chand Talsdad establish: namely, the fact that Kassim Bardai had been in England the previous year in June, the month in which Sir Robert Grainger had come to his death. Chand Talsdad squared his powerful shoulders and his beetling grey brows drew together.

"What were your relations with Prince Kassim?" The coroner's tone was courteous and respectful rather than judicial. He was conscious of Berenice's charm and, moreover, was grateful for the information she had so freely given.

Berenice's frankness continued. "I saw a good deal of Prince Kassim. He called on me frequently,

sent me flowers, and wrote to me when he was absent from London."

Borrowdean wondered why she had never mentioned the Hindu's attentions to him; but perhaps she had and the name had slipped his mind. Berenice had such a coterie of admirers.

"Was Prince Kassim—er—in love with your ladyship?" The question was put apologetically.

"I suppose so." Berenice spoke regretfully.

"And what were your feelings toward him?" The coroner looked as though he wanted to apologize for these personalities.

"I regarded him simply as an acquaintance," said Berenice briefly.

The coroner would have abandoned this line of questioning were it not for one of Burton's cards.

"Did Prince Kassim," he now asked, "ever make you a proposal of marriage?"

Borrowdean saw Chand Talsdad straighten fiercely in his chair.

Berenice gave a queer little smile. "Yes; he offered me the honour of becoming his princess when I had made it plain to him that in England proposals of marriage were still the rule after declarations of love—even from a prince."

The spectators in general, glad of any chance to relax, laughed at her words. But the ferocity of Chand Talsdad's scrutiny of Berenice was intensified. Borrowdean became hot with indignation against all Hindus, but against Kassim Bardai in particular. If

he had stayed in India where he belonged, Berenice would not have been mixed up in a murder trial.

"When and where did this proposal take place?" asked the coroner next.

A shade of annoyance came over Berenice's features. "Well really, I don't see—"

"It will be best to answer," interposed the coroner, still gently.

Berenice gave a little resigned shrug. "Prince Kassim made the proposal on the cliffs near Twin Turrets one afternoon a few days before the ball."

Borrowdean started. That must have been the day on which he had carried to Kassim Bardai Berenice's note asking for an interview.

"Did you accept the—er—offer of marriage?" asked the coroner.

Berenice slightly drooped her head. "I did."

This time Max as well as Borrowdean started.

The coroner, too, looked surprised. "Your feelings then toward Prince Kassim had changed?"

"Not in the least," said Berenice wearily.

"It was then to be a so-called 'marriage of convenience'?"

Berenice raised her head. "Not in the ordinary meaning of the phrase—no! His title, his wealth were nothing to me personally."

"But I understand that your finances have lately been in a straightened condition?"

Berenice flushed. "It is true, but that fact had nothing to do with my acceptance of Prince Kassim."

"Then what reasons did cause your acceptance?"

Berenice suddenly acquired hauteur. "Private reasons—and they must remain private."

"Your engagement to the prince was not made public?" The coroner's voice had grown harsh. In the effort to sound Berenice's soul she had become to him witness, not woman.

"It was not made public. There were reasons on both sides why it should not be known for a while."

"Were you still engaged to Prince Kassim up to the time of his death?"

"No." The reply was sharp and distinct.

"When was the engagement broken?"

"The night of the ball."

"Where?"

She hesitated. Then: "In the library," she said half defiantly.

"At what hour?" persisted the coroner.

There was a tortured look in Berenice's eyes which made Borrowdean suffer with her.

"It was early in the evening," she said faintly; "not later than ten-thirty, I should think."

"Was it your ladyship or Prince Kassim who broke the engagement?"

"Does it matter?" she asked wearily. "Oh, I suppose it was I who actually broke it—but he forced me to do so."

"What do you mean by 'forced' you?"

"Well, he was unwilling to fulfil a certain promise—a *private* matter," she added with emphasis.

"This promise was the condition of your marriage to him?"

"It was," her tone infinitely bitter.

"You and Prince Kassim quarrelled as the result of his unwillingness to fulfil this promise?"

"We broke the engagement," she answered evasively.

"Were there not mutual recriminations?"

"He made me loathe him!" The words burst from her passionately and as though against her will.

The coroner was quick to press his point. "Then there was a violent scene between you?"

Berenice attempted to retrieve herself. "I do not know what you mean by 'a violent scene.' We could not come to any agreement certainly."

"Did Prince Kassim threaten or attack you?"

The question startled her. "No!" she cried vehemently, but her eyes wavered.

"Think a moment," urged the coroner not unkindly, "did not Prince Kassim attack you and did not you in a struggle to escape him seize upon the only means of escape, one of the daggers on the wall above you?"

"No, no!" Berenice put out her hands in passionate protest. Her face was blanched and desperate. "He did not threaten or attack me," she reiterated with a feverish intonation.

"Then how," demanded the coroner sternly, "do you account for this torn piece of your gown being found clutched in Kassim Bardai's dead hand?" He

drew from under the pile of papers before him the bit of spangled gauze which Borrowdean had dreaded to see.

The desperation in her face grew. "I cannot account for it. You must draw what conclusions you will."

"They will not be favourable," the coroner warned her gravely. Borrowdean's misery was intense. It seemed to him that Berenice was deliberately incriminating herself—and yet, perhaps not, for if she admitted that the Hindu had attacked her, as that damaging bit of spangled gauze intimated, the inference would naturally be that she had defended herself in the manner suggested by the coroner. Justifiable homicide this might be considered, but even under extenuating circumstances Borrowdean would not, could not bring himself to believe Berenice blood guilty. She was not a woman of unbridled passion; she would call for help, not stab a man.

"How long," resumed the coroner, "did you remain in the library?"

Berenice made a visible effort to calm herself. "Perhaps a quarter of an hour, perhaps longer; I cannot tell."

"Did any one enter the library while you were there?"

"No," her reply quick and tense.

"Was the corridor door closed or open?"

"It was closed."

"And locked?"

"Yes; it was locked." Berenice's voice took on a reckless note. "I locked it to insure privacy. I did not want any person to come in casually and overhear what I was discussing with Prince Kassim."

"And the terrace door—was that locked too?"

"I suppose so. It was closed at any rate."

The coroner fixed his eyes steadily on Berenice. "Was Prince Kassim alive when you left the library?"

"He was."

But she shivered and the words seemed dragged from her. Borrowdean was morbidly certain they held conviction for no one in the room except himself.

The coroner's expression was stern. "By which door did you go out?"

"The terrace door," hastily.

"Ah! Then you possessed a duplicate key? Miss Egerton has stated that, after locking the door, she retained the key."

Berenice made a quick effort to repair her slip. "I did not intend to say that the terrace door was locked—only closed. Certainly I did not possess a duplicate key."

The coroner favoured her with an incredulous smile. "If you did not unlock the terrace door, who did?"

"I do not know."

Again her words failed to carry conviction. Borrowdean knew that well enough as his aching eyes wandered over the faces of the crowd, meeting hollow

compassion, unwholesome curiosity, and even horror in the glances directed upon her.

"Where did you go upon leaving the library?" The coroner's manner was increasingly magisterial.

"I went down on the cliffs and stayed there for a long while. I wished to be alone."

"Did you meet any one there?"

"I met no one."

Why, Borrowdean wondered half angrily, could she not at least try to put some ring of truth into her tone? Did she deem the circumstantial evidence against her too strong even to make an attempt to extricate herself?

"You saw nothing," persisted the coroner, "of a man in cavalier costume?"

"No!" She spoke now with vehemence.

The coroner changed his line of attack. "Who was the man who sent a note in to you by the Hindu butler?"

"I do not care to give his name. He came on a matter of private business. He went away immediately after it was transacted—about ten-thirty—and did not return."

"Did you reenter the library after having left it?"

"I remained on the cliffs till very late. Then when I went up to the house I met Mr. Egerton on the terrace near the front entrance and we went together—into the ballroom." Berenice's voice was even and deliberate, like one repeating a lesson learned by rote.

"Had you any reason to suppose that Mr. Egerton had recently come from the library?"

"Certainly not." The surprise in her tone was genuine. "He had come out from the ballroom to look for me."

"Did you unlock the library door leading into the corridor—the door which you had previously locked?"

"No; I did not go near the library. I went directly into the ballroom with Mr. Egerton."

"But you still had the key in your possession?"

"Yes; I unconsciously took it with me when I left the library."

"My Lady, why were you so anxious on the morning after Prince Kassim's death to conceal the fact that the key had been in your possession throughout the evening, instead of being accidentally discovered by you on the hall floor as you then affirmed?"

Berenice moistened her lips. "Naturally I knew that some unpleasant inference would be drawn."

"You feared this inference so much then that you came downstairs after the other guests had gone to their rooms and slipped the key in the lock—or was your desire to consult with Mrs. Dalrymple more impelling even than the desire to rid yourself of the key?"

Berenice for a moment looked startled. As she had not heard Essy Grieve's testimony, she was unaware of what the girl had divulged. "I went down to return the key," she said rapidly, "and I—I met Mrs. Dalrymple in the hall."

The coroner showed his disbelief in words and manner as he asked, "What did you have to say to the housekeeper of Twin Turrets that could not wait until morning?"

"Something of a private nature." Berenice's voice was cool, steady, and determined. Her glance as it encountered his did not waver.

The coroner leaned back in his chair and surveyed her gravely. It seemed impossible to chip the armour of quiet and firm reserve which she had girded on. Her very frankness left no vulnerable spot to strike at and she met his attempted thrusts with a calm refusal to answer which paralyzed a further attack in that quarter. As a last resort he tried intimidation.

"Do you realize that your repeated answers of 'private reasons' and matters of a 'private nature' cannot do otherwise than lead the jury to the very inference which you say you sought to avoid by surreptitiously returning the library key to its lock?"

But Berenice countered with the same disarming frankness. "I realize that fully." Her face was white, but her voice unmoved.

"And you still refuse to state the substance of your conversation with Mrs. Dalrymple?"

"I do."

That ended her examination and the case was given over to the jury.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE HOUSE ON THE SEA WALL

THE hours, passed in awaiting the verdict of the coroner's jury, were centuries of mental agony to the principal actors at the inquest. Berenice was the most composed of all but this very composure was disquieting to Borrowdean for it suggested the resignation of despair. It was plain that she expected to be held for trial and was prepared to go through with it. Mrs. Dalrymple, still in a state of collapse, had sought her room immediately upon the return to Twin Turrets and still remained there with door locked against well-meaning intrusion. Ahmed performed his duties as butler with, it seemed to Borrowdean's irritated nerves, more furtive glance and softer tread than ever. One could feel the brown fellow listening for the verdict they all dreaded.

Miss Egerton made no attempt at conversation herself and discouraged it in others. She even failed to respond to Max's affectionate raillery and sat apart from her guests, stiff and austere, in a corner of the great hall, working with grim diligence on some garments destined for the children of an Orphans' Home in the East End of London. But every now and then she would look up from her work and her

gaze would fasten itself on Max with questioning anxiety. Borrowdean knew what a blow it would be to this authoritative, self-contained woman, with all her pride of race and family, if her idolized nephew, the only living being to whom her heart was really open, should be found or suspected to be, implicated in the death of Kassim Bardai, her guest and his.

Max, for his part, tried to keep up the others' spirits and his own by going to the piano which had been moved into the hall and dashing off a gay little chanson.

"I say, Berenice," he said lightly, "you know this. Come and sing it with me."

Berenice shook her head. "I can't now, Max; I simply can't."

Max swung round on his seat and looked at her with a face of whimsical tenderness. "Oh, come now, just a verse or two. It will brace you up. You know how well our voices blend, don't you, eh?"

Berenice smiled wanly and rose to humour his caprice, but a glance at Miss Egerton, frowning now over the orphans' garments, caused her to resume her chair. "It wouldn't do tonight, Max."

"I should think not," spoke up Ethelyn sharply. Her eyes held a cold fire. "You seem to forget what the jury's verdict may mean to more than one here."

Max swung round again and brought his hands down upon the keys with a vicious crash. "By George! Ethelyn, you're the spectre at the feast."

He got up abruptly and crossed the hall to the

entrance door. His face had that haggard look which it had worn now and again during the inquest.

Ethelyn rose, too. "If you are going out on the terrace, I should like to walk with you. I promise to be very cheerful." The words were light, but her tone was still sharp.

Max turned quickly. A careless smile played now about his lips.

"Don't mind my grouchiness, Ethie. I daresay my nerves are a bit jumpy. Come along out. I think there'll be a moon later."

Miss Egerton frowned after them. "The way that young woman pursues Max is disgraceful. You are responsible for her being here, Borrowdean. Why can't you take charge of her?"

"Oh, I'm going to look after her," he answered vaguely, hardly knowing what Miss Egerton said.

He was, in fact, absorbed in speculating upon Ethelyn's apparent hold over Max. If it had any connection with Kassim Bardai's death she should be made to speak for Berenice's sake. But how the deuce was a man to make her speak? Ethie was uncommon tight-mouthed when she chose to be.

"It is a shame, Miss Egerton," remarked Berenice contritely, "that this house party should have brought you so much unpleasantness. I am heartily sorry for my share in it."

Miss Egerton sewed on with uncompromising zeal. "Your testimony was most unsatisfactory," she said irrelevantly and with severity.

"I know it," sighed Berenice, "but I couldn't help it."

She leaned her head back against the chair and closed her eyes. She looked utterly weary. Borrowdean felt indignant with Miss Egerton. A woman ought to be able to say consoling words to another woman.

Miss Egerton's needle flew in and out with greater rapidity. "If Eloise Eversleigh," she observed tartly, "had had the common sense to engage herself to Max instead of to that young Army idiot things might have been different. Max might not have needed a costume ball to amuse him."

"Deuced inconsiderate of Eloise Eversleigh," drawled Borrowdean.

Miss Egerton glanced up at him sharply; before she could administer a rebuke Burton appeared in the doorway. Borrowdean sprang to his feet with an exclamation of dismay. He knew instinctively that the detective had come to report the verdict of the coroner's jury.

Berenice opened her eyes suddenly and, recognizing Burton, put her hands to her throat as though she were choking. She, too, knew why he had come.

"Don't keep me in suspense," she said nervously. "I am to be held for trial? Please tell me quickly."

"You don't need to get worked up," said Burton with maddening slowness. "The verdict's a disappointment—it's murder by a person or persons unknown."

Berenice gave a little hysterical laugh. "The verdict might have been a good deal worse, Mr. Burton."

The detective eyed her significantly. "That's a fact, it might." He was plainly disgruntled.

"Now perhaps," remarked Miss Egerton, with a sigh of relief, "we shall have an end to notoriety."

"Don't know about that, ma'am," answered Burton ominously. "Better read what the papers say; they're getting the extras out. If you don't mind, I'd like a word with that girl, Essy." Without waiting for Miss Egerton's permission, he went toward the servants' hall.

Miss Egerton's lips tightened. "So we are to continue to be harried and hounded by detectives and made the talk of every scandalmonger in the kingdom. If ever I get back to Cavendish Square among decent-living, respectable people I hope I shall have the sense to remain there and when I think of giving another house party I will invite the guests myself."

There came a stricken expression into Berenice's face. "I shall take the morning train to London, Miss Egerton," she said quietly.

Borrowdean's features twitched, there was a peculiar light in his eyes. "Miss Egerton, no doubt your guests have caused you inconvenience, but you owe them a little courtesy since they are your guests."

Berenice raised her hand in protest. "Miss Egerton is justified in feeling annoyed, Reggie. I did not exactly understand about the invitation—but I should not have come here. I am very sorry."

She turned to ascend the stairs. Miss Egerton checked her with one of her authoritative gestures.

"I am sorry too," she said jerkily, "sorry for what I said. I didn't mean you particularly. On the whole I should prefer that you stayed on a while."

A gentle smile lighted Berenice's face. "You are very kind, Miss Egerton, but I think I ought to go back to London in the morning."

Miss Egerton frowned and cleared her throat. "I am not in the habit of repeating invitations and it is not easy for me to apologize, but I say again I am sorry if I have been discourteous to you and I ask you once more to finish out your visit. I have grown accustomed to you and—well, I want you to stay."

Berenice hesitated a moment; then she impulsively leaned forward and kissed Miss Egerton on the cheek. "You are awfully kind. Of course I'll stay if you want me to."

Miss Egerton snapped the moisture from her eyes as Berenice ran up the stairway.

"I'm no end grateful to you for your goodness to Berenice," said Borrowdean earnestly.

"You needn't be. I like her. I don't want to like her, but I do. Now where can I send for a paper? We may as well know the worst and have it over."

"I'll drive back to the Bay Town and see if the extras are out."

"That might be a good idea. Get back as soon as you can. I don't want to wait up all night."

A few minutes later Borrowdean stepped into the

wagonette and was driven rapidly away from the old turretted house on the promontory, now showing as a black irregular mass against the evening darkness. Ethelyn from the terrace threw him some sarcastic little remark about his impatience to secure a paper. Max had ungallantly left her to watch alone for the rising of the moon.

The coachman, a Yorkshire man, and consequently endowed with native superstition, did not enjoy this ride along the verge of the night-hidden moors with the solemn booming of the sea the only sound to break the silence. He was continually glancing about as though expecting some goblin shape to spring up before him and upon Borrowdean's asking what made him so "confoundedly jumpy," he launched forth into colourful tales of the Red Cavalier and his propensity for accosting belated travellers on the moors, appearing to them in all manner of fantastic shapes, but always contriving to wear the costume of the Merry Monarch's days.

Borrowdean stifled a yawn. The coachman was wearisomely prolix.

"I don't fancy you need to alarm yourself, Thomas. We are not actually on the moors and the Cavalier has lately kept himself under cover. He doesn't consort well with detectives."

"Do yo think, my lord, t' Cavalier be flesh an' blood?"

"What else, Thomas?"

"He wor hanged amaist tree hunderd year ago."

The coachman's voice dropped to an awed whisper. "'Tis his picture hangs in t' dining-hall oop at t' hoos. Theer's nobbat one person in aw t' Riding—a wild slip of a laad—thinks t' Cavalier be flesh and blood. An' this poar laad's wits ha amaist fligged away sence 'e took oop wi' t' Cavalier."

"Took up with the Cavalier?" encouraged Borrowdean. His speculations in regard to the Cavalier were beginning to formulate into definite suspicions and he welcomed all information concerning him, were it no more than superstitious gossip.

"Ay, my lord," resumed Thomas, "t' laad took ter follerin' 'im about o' neets, an' mebbe aidin' 'im in his devil's work. Mony a person ha seed t' laad follerin' t' Cavalier across t' moars. T' laad ha taaken too ter drink an' no one 'll ha speech wi' him."

"Who is this lad, Thomas?"

The coachman's volubility abruptly ceased. "Ah don't think Ah'd best naame 'im."

"Why not, Thomas?"

"Mebbe it wad get 'im an' soom yan else into trooble."

Borrowdean surveyed curiously the Yorkshireman's thick-set, obstinate shoulders. "How long have you been coachman at Twin Turrets, Thomas?"

"Aboot two year—mebbe," Thomas answered with true native caution.

Borrowdean tried again. "What did you think of Sir Robert Grainger? He was an eccentric, wasn't he?"

"It worn't my plaace ter think about t' maaster," said Thomas bluntly. "Theer's allus foalk ter saay a maan's queer in 'is head like if he do different from they. Yo'll ha ter ax others about 'im."

The wagonette was winding now among the narrow streets of the Bay Town and Borrowdean had no further opportunity for trying to break through Thomas's stubborn cautiousness. Fisher-boys crying "extras" were keeping the little old-world town of smuggling fame awake and Borrowdean had no difficulty in possessing himself of a half dozen papers.

A hasty reading of the front page stung him into a belligerent humour which made him want to fight the world—particularly the newspaper world—in order to force the retraction of these insinuations against Berenice. Of what use was the jury's verdict of "persons unknown" in the face of calumny like this? The worst interpretation was put on every phase of her testimony. She was not spared in any instance; it was even practically stated that the jury had been flagrantly negligent of their duty in failing to indict her. But what angered Borrowdean perhaps more than all was the unnecessary dragging in of the details of her unhappy married life and the putting of the blame for the divorce on her shoulders instead of where it belonged—on the shoulders of her cad of a husband. Everything possible was done to blacken her character and prejudice the public mind against her.

Borrowdean's burning sense of the injustice of it all

drove him to a step which he had been contemplating for some days but had hesitated to undertake through dislike of interfering in concerns which were not his affair. Now, however, he felt that matters had come to a crisis where the suspicion that had been troubling him must be verified and Berenice's name cleared before the world. That she would make no effort to vindicate herself, he knew. But he would attempt it, come what might. Things could not be worse than they were.

Heedless of Miss Egerton's injunction to return as quickly as possible he bade Thomas wait for him by the post-box in the centre of the town and proceeded, on foot, to the queer, tall, furtive-looking houses near the water's edge from a window of one of which a man had peered down upon them as they were driving to the inquest. The memory of Berenice's bitter expression as she had stared up at that window quickened Borrowdean's pace. He had no difficulty in finding the house he sought. He had made careful mental note of it: the last but one upon the sea wall and built fairly on top of its neighbours.

The house, as he mounted the stone doorsteps, was dark save for a single light in an upper window obliquely facing the sea. An elderly woman of unprepossessing appearance answered his summons at the door. She carried a candle in one hand and held it in such a fashion that its light illuminated his features, but left hers in shadow. She seemed in fact like an anachronistic survival of those days when the

inhabitants of this very house perhaps were roused from sleep by excise officers, armed with warrants authorizing them to search for smugglers.

"I wish to speak with Captain Greville Coningsby," said Borrowdean in a confident tone.

"He doan't live here, sur." The woman tried to close the door.

Borrowdean put out his foot and prevented. "That won't do, my good woman. I have seen the man here."

The woman kept her face persistently shaded. "Then 'tis anoother naame he calls 'imself. Ah doan't knaw ony such person as yo speak of. This is a respectable lodging-hoos an' he might ha coom here ter see yan o' th' lodgers."

"No, I am sure that he is staying here." And Borrowdean set to work to describe the man whom Berenice had met at the tower on the cliffs, the same man, he was convinced, though he had caught but a transient glimpse of him, who had peered down from the window of this house. Captain Coningsby in his proper person he had seen but once in his life—at Berenice's wedding. She had met the young officer while travelling abroad, and immediately after the wedding they went back to the continent for the honeymoon from which Berenice returned alone some months later. Scandalous tales of Captain Coningsby began to be spread in army circles and finally he resigned his commission to avoid being forced to do so. Berenice, out of pity for the ruin he had made

of himself, joined him in Vienna and attempted a second time to live with him. It ended two or three years later in her instituting divorce proceedings against her husband.

In the midst of his description of the supposed Coningsby, Borrowdean heard some one coming down stairs.

"What's all the fuss about, Mrs. Barker?" demanded a boyish, excited voice from the hall.

Mrs. Barker, startled by the interruption, let the door swing open and Borrowdean, quietly pushing by her, stepped into a stuffy, box-like hall. He found a slim youth in a rakishly-tilted cap confronting him. The light from Mrs. Barker's candle showed the lad to be possessed of a shock of copper-coloured hair, shifty eyes of an uncertain brownish hue, and a pasty, unwholesome complexion. He was singularly like, and yet unlike, some one whom Borrowdean could not at that moment name to himself. In age the boy might have been seventeen or eighteen.

Borrowdean repeated his query and the description of the man he sought.

"He doesn't lodge here," said the boy. "Does he, Mrs. Barker?"

The landlady shook her head. "Noa; thot's what Ah told t' gentleman, Maaster Leon." Her tone was conciliatory.

She had forgotten to shade her face and Borrowdean saw that it was thin and shrewd and furtive—not at all pleasing.

The boy slouched toward the door. "Well, I'm off, Mrs. Barker." He stared curiously at Borrowdean. "Want any guiding through the town? I take it you're a stranger."

"Thanks," said Borrowdean briefly, "I can find my way without a guide." He had taken an instinctive dislike to the youth.

"Maaster Leon" bestowed on him another curious prolonged stare, at once insolent and suspicious, then swung on his heel and went out, giving the door a vicious bang.

Borrowdean, more than ever settled in the conviction which had sent him to this house, addressed Mrs. Barker with sternness, saying he had reason to know that the man he sought was among her lodgers and that if she wished to avoid trouble with the police, she would see that he had opportunity to speak with him.

The mention of the police served to quicken Mrs. Barker's wits and make her complaisant. She admitted that one of her lodgers resembled the person Borrowdean had described to her, but his name was Mr. Sartoris. She thought that Mr. Sartoris was out now but she would go up to his room and make certain. She left the candle on a corner table and mounted a steep flight of stairs to a dimly-lighted upper hall.

Borrowdean had just decided that it would be best to follow her up to Mr. Sartoris' room in case she should lie about his presence there when he heard

some one come up the doorsteps and insert a key in the lock. He felt a thrill of expectation. This might be Coningsby himself. It certainly was a lodger since he was provided with a key. Borrowdean, not wishing the sight of him to alarm Coningsby into flight as had happened at the tower on the cliffs, drew back into a dark corner of the hall. He kept his eyes fastened on the door which, with a single turn of the key, swung open as though the newcomer was accustomed to unlocking it.

The door closed softly and a man in silk hat and evening clothes stood in the hall. The candlelight shone full on his face. Borrowdean with difficulty repressed an exclamation of astonishment.

The "lodger" was Max!

CHAPTER XXV

"MISS WILTON"

MAX, not observing Borrowdean in the dark corner of the hall, immediately ascended the stairs. He did not, however, run up with his usual light, boyish step, but went up slowly and deliberately. His expression, too, unlike its wont, was neither careless nor gay; on the contrary it was resolute and a little grim. For the first time Borrowdean noted a resemblance between Max and Miss Egerton.

Max mounted the first flight of stairs and Borrowdean heard him ascending a second with quickened step. Some instinct stronger than idle curiosity impelled Borrowdean to follow the moment those footsteps were no longer audible. It was not without purpose that Max was provided with a key to the lodging-house where Greville Coningsby was presumably staying, and Borrowdean intended to find out if this had to do with the murder in which public opinion implicated Berenice. He was just mounting the second flight of stairs when he heard a woman's steps coming along the hall below. Supposing this to be Mrs. Barker returning from "Mr. Sartoris" room and not wishing to be discovered prowling through her house he leaped up the remaining stairs and found

himself in a dimly-lighted hall, the four doors leading from which were tightly closed. Which door had Max entered?

There was no means of telling, no sliver of light under any threshold, no sound of voices. Borrowdean had practically no detective instincts and so was at a loss what to do. Finally a straightforward, but unsleuthlike idea occurred to him. He approached the nearest door and knocked on it authoritatively. A startled movement within warned him that some one was there.

He grasped the handle of the door, it turned, and he stepped into a room shadowy with the first rays of the moon.

At his sudden entrance an indistinct figure blotted against the side wall, rose hastily to its feet and resolved itself into a slim woman's form.

“I beg your pardon,” began Borrowdean in some embarrassment, “but I was looking for—”

“Hush! Please lower your voice,” entreated the young woman—he judged from her slenderness that she was young—in an eager whisper and down she went on her knees again, apparently listening at the wall.

Borrowdean stood in the silence of amazement, looking down at her and perplexedly twirling his monocle. Suddenly a light flashed along, or rather through the wall, illuminating the delicate features of the young woman crouched against it and showing above her a curtain of heavy, dark plush which she

was holding back with one slim hand. Borrowdean moved closer. He saw then that the light came from the next room through a small hole cut in the wall.

"I say," he began again.

The young woman with an impatient gesture checked him and, letting the curtain fall into place, thus shutting out the light, rose once more to her feet.

"Don't you understand," she demanded in an angry whisper, "that if you talk you can be heard in the next room?"

Borrowdean understood that something was going on in that next room which it might behoove him to know about so, rather unceremoniously drawing the young woman aside, he pulled the curtain back and crouched down by the wall in his turn. At first he could make out nothing save a round hole of light, partially obscured by the legs of some piece of furniture, but finally by twisting his head about and closing one eye, he contrived to see a section of the interior of a typical lodging-house room. By the mantel, stood Max reading a note, an exasperated smile on his lips. As far as Borrowdean could see he was alone in the room.

Max crumpled up the note impatiently, thrust it into the flame of a lamp, then stamped it under foot till only black wisps remained. Then he blew out the lamp and crossed to the door.

Borrowdean got up and he, too, crossed to the door, resolved to accost Max in the hall, though he had no idea what he was to say to him.

The young woman laid a restraining hand on Borrowdean's arm. "Please wait a moment. Let him at least get by the door. Since you forced yourself into my room—I'm sure I don't know why—you might show me a little consideration and not walk out of it in the very face of another gentleman."

Borrowdean stopped short. "I beg your pardon," he muttered awkwardly.

Then it seemed to him that the young woman stifled a little mocking laugh. She struck a match and lighted a candle and he gazed into a pair of large brown eyes, in which mirth struggled with a proper demureness.

His mouth hardened and he put up his monocle. "I should like to know the reason for your extraordinary interest in the gentleman who has gone out from the next room."

"Most women find Mr. Maxwell Egerton extraordinarily interesting, do they not?" she parried.

Her amused expression irritated Borrowdean and her ingenuousness he set down as mockery. "You know Mr. Egerton?"

She shrugged lightly. "As well as most people do, I fancy." She picked up a little flower-trimmed hat from a chair and began to pin it on hastily. "I don't think I need detain you any longer. Mr. Egerton must have reached the ground floor by now."

"You mean to follow him?" Borrowdean demanded with directness.

She smiled. "Perhaps. Do you?"

Borrowdean flushed. "Mr. Egerton is a friend of mine."

"And to me," she said coolly, locking the door as they stepped into the hall, "he is an interesting study. I think we are justified in following him, Lord Borrowdean. Oh yes, I know your name," observing his start of surprise. "I believe everybody in the Bay Town knows by sight the guests at Twin Turrets."

Mrs. Barker confronted them in the lower hall. She seemed rather apprehensive. "Ah thought yo mun ha gone, sur. Ah've been oop to Mr. Sartoris' room; he's not in. Ah'd noa notion yo knew Miss Wilton, sur," glancing suspiciously from him to the young woman by his side.

"We're old acquaintances, Mrs. Barker," Miss Wilton spoke up readily.

She opened the outer door and preceded Borrowdean down the steps. Mrs. Barker closed the door sharply after them. As Borrowdean had feared, Max had lost himself from their sight in the labyrinth of passages and little alleys intersecting the narrow street. Miss Wilton, however, wasted no time in indecision but turned at once into a little court which looked like a *cul-de-sac*, but instead terminated in a hidden flight of steps leading down to another passage, similarly provided with a series of steps. This second flight descended directly upon a narrow stone pathway running alongside the sea-wall. Here the waters were beating angrily against the bastion. The

moon, stretching a band of silver across the sea, disclosed a flat-bottomed rowboat tossing at anchor near the wall. At the further end of the miniature embankment Borrowdean made out the figures of a man and girl walking slowly in the opposite direction.

“Your friend, Mr. Egerton,” said Miss Wilton softly. “Whenever he visits the Bay Town of an evening he walks on this little esplanade. He must be a lover of the sea; is he not, Lord Borrowdean?”

Borrowdean ignored the question, put in a quizzical, half mocking tone, and advanced with rapid and determined pace toward those two distant figures. The sight of that girlish form in fluttering white aroused a suspicion that grew into certainty as he came nearer. Miss Wilton made no effort this time to restrain him, but tripped along by his side, a curious smile on her lips and a tense, eager look in her eyes which made them very dark and brilliant. Most men would have pronounced her an exceedingly attractive young woman and would have felt a thrill of adventure in their unconventional meeting and her cool appropriation of him as an “old acquaintance” but Borrowdean, singularly unsusceptible to all women save one and, in this instance, moreover, intent on fathoming the reason for Max’s mysterious actions, failed to be impressed in any way by Miss Wilton.

Max, at the sound of their approach, whirled about with a rapidity which proved the state of his nerves.

“Reginald!” he cried in angry dismay.

Lona—Borrowdean's suspicion had been correct—clung to his arm affrightedly. Max released himself and tried to carry off the situation lightly.

"We're mutually caught, eh, Reggie?" He threw a smiling glance at Miss Wilton. "Won't you introduce me, old chap?"

Borrowdean gave him a look of contempt. He turned to Lona and his expression softened. "Little girl, we've been no end worried about you. I want you to come back with me to Twin Turrets."

Lona looked pitifully at Max. "I can't go, Lord Borrowdean."

Borrowdean addressed Max. "How is it I find this child in your company? What's the meaning of it, eh?"

Max's face darkened. "You don't need to take that parson's tone, Reggie. Why not ask the young lady herself?"

"I prefer to ask you."

Max gave a short laugh of exasperation. "Hang it all! Why should I get such a grilling? Lona was afraid—afraid of Chand Talsdad—and she went into hiding to keep clear of him. He meant to claim her as his ward and probably take her back to India. I looked her up a lodging-house—and there you have the whole story. But, I say, Reggie," with another glance at Miss Wilton, "it's hardly *convenable*, is it, to bore this lady with the private history of people who are strangers to her?"

"Not altogether strangers, Mr. Egerton," Miss

Wilton interposed sweetly. “I also am one of Mrs. Barker’s lodgers. I became interested in your young friend when I heard that she was so much of an invalid that she could not go across to the inn for her meals but must have them brought to her room. I am glad,” suddenly addressing Lona who was staring at her in a frightened way, “I am glad that your health is improved. I was sure that your evening walks by the sea would benefit you. I think I will take one myself and leave you three to talk together.”

With a smile and nod she was gone, walking rapidly along the little esplanade. Borrowdean saw her stop a moment and gaze with singular intentness at that flat-bottomed row-boat tossing on the moonlit waters. Max stared after her uneasily.

“Who the deuce is she?”

“I think,” said Lona faintly, “that she has the next room to mine at Mrs. Barker’s.”

It seemed to Borrowdean, though he could not be sure in the uncertain light, that a shade of fear came into Max’s eyes.

“I shouldn’t wonder but Lord Borrowdean was right, Lona. You had better let him take you back to Twin Turrets.”

“But—but what can I tell them there?” protested Lona.

“Why, tell them,” said Borrowdean sternly before Max could reply, “what Mr. Egerton told me—if it is the truth.”

"By Jove! Reggie," began Max, excitedly.

"I don't think I can go back to Twin Turrets," Lona interrupted nervously, "Chand Talsdad would question me and—"

"The old boy needn't know you're back," broke in Max hastily. "You see, Reggie, how afraid she is of the old chap."

"Lona," asked Borrowdean gravely, "what questions do you fear that Chand Talsdad will put to you?"

Lona stood gazing at him in consternation. She could find nothing to say. She threw a little appealing glance at Max which he disregarded.

"Lona," said Borrowdean in the same grave tone, "are you afraid that Chand Talsdad will question you in regard to something you know about your brother's death?"

Lona quivered. She looked so frightened and so pathetically young that Borrowdean felt a great pity for her.

"It is not that, not that!" she reiterated in a high-pitched, hysterical voice.

"Well never mind what it is," said Borrowdean reassuringly. "The old fellow shall be made to let you alone. Come, little girl, we'll go back now to Twin Turrets. I've got the wagonette waiting for me by the post-box."

Lona hesitated, again looking at Max. "Shall I go back, Mr. Egerton?"

Max shrugged indifferently. "My dear child,

do as you think best. I don't know that I'm qualified to advise you. Mrs. Barker's doesn't appear to be a particularly secure hiding-place—if you want to hide.”

Lona seemed both perplexed and hurt by his off-hand answer and cool manner. Then after a moment she threw up her head with a defiant little gesture.

“I'm tired of hiding. I will go back to Twin Turrets, Lord Borrowdean, and Chand Talsdad can ask me questions if he chooses.”

“Now it's a brave little lotus-flower,” said Max in a caressing voice. “You have been foolish, haven't you, child, to run away and hide just for a caprice, a fancy?” There was a smile of tender amusement on his lips.

Lona's defiance suddenly melted. Her eyes filled with tears. “Have I been so—so very foolish?”

Max laughed softly and pinched her cheek. “You wouldn't like me to say so, now would you?”

Lona gave him a smile of tremulous content, her brief resentment gone. Max's power to change her mood at will had never been more obvious. The adoration in the dark eyes of the young Hindu girl angered Borrowdean. He felt that Max merited no woman's worship.

“We had better be getting back to Twin Turrets,” he remarked curtly.

To his surprise Lona hung back. “I do not want to go tonight after all—perhaps tomorrow—”

"Now, little girl," said Borrowdean in a gentler tone, "the thing for you to do—the right thing—is to come along. Nobody is going to scold you. Miss Egerton will be relieved to see you and—and if you need a friend—there's Lady Berenice. She would be a jolly good friend too."

Lona, however, was not to be persuaded. Max said nothing at all, but stood watching her with his smile of tender mockery, which Borrowdean somehow felt had more influence over her than any words of his.

"Look here, Lona," Borrowdean exclaimed at length, "I have half a mind to take you back by force. You shouldn't stay at that lodging-house, you know."

Lona seemed to be waiting for advice from Max. Receiving none, she drew herself straighter.

"Perhaps I will go back to Twin Turrets tomorrow, Lord Borrowdean, if you will come for me and—and I think I should like Lady Berenice to come, too."

"Why not make it a family gathering," laughed Max, "and let me come, too?"

Lona turned to him eagerly. "Would you come, Mr. Egerton?"

He pinched her cheek again. "Of course, if my respected aunt allows me to after she hears of my share in your running away, you foolish child. She will have more questions to ask me than Chand Talsdad could find to put to you."

At mention of the Hindu Lona shivered. “If I do come back, Lord Borrowdean, will *he* have to know?”

Borrowdean patted her arm reassuringly. “Now don’t you worry about that old chap. He shan’t be allowed to bother you.”

Borrowdean and Max accompanied Lona to the door of Mrs. Barker’s lodging-house. Borrowdean did not ask again for “Mr. Sartoris.” He preferred to do so when Max should not be there.

Lona promised that she would be ready to return to Twin Turrets the next morning. “And you will come for me, too, Mr. Egerton?” her eyes searching his wistfully.

“Oh, I shouldn’t wonder,” he answered with a laugh. “Goodnight, little lotus-flower.”

For some reason Borrowdean felt vaguely uneasy as the door closed behind Lona. He did not like the idea of her spending another night in Mrs. Barker’s lodging-house. But what could he do? He could hardly take her away by force. In silence he and Max made their way up the queer old streets darkened by the weird shadows of the tall, narrow houses guiltily crouched one against the other. Still in silence they went on to the post-box and climbed into the waiting wagonette. Borrowdean could not bring himself to speak and Max was strangely disinclined for conversation.

Finally, however, Max could stand the strain no longer. “I say, old man,” he began persuasively,

"I know you think me an awful rotter but—I give you my word—I haven't harmed the little lotus-flower. I promised Berenice I'd play the deaf adder and—well, I have my virtuous moments."

Borrowdean surveyed him gravely. "If I thought you had harmed that little girl I should not be riding with you now. But all the same you have treated her caddishly. You have stolen her love to suit some purpose of your own, and I don't think it is wholly to gratify your pride of conquest. Max, you know more than you should about Kassim Bardai's death. Is Lona shielding you?"

Max's face showed a whiteness not due altogether to the paling light of the moon. "Thanks for your opinion of me, Reggie," his voice hard, "but you are wrong. I did not kill Kassim Bardai."

"You know more about his death than you have told. Max, it is your duty to speak—for Berenice's sake. Do you know what the papers are saying of her? They practically call her guilty."

"It is an infernal shame!" declared Max with genuine indignation. "But honestly, Reggie, if I were to say any more than I did at the inquest it would put Berenice in a worse mess than she is in now."

"What do you mean?" Borrowdean scarcely knew his own voice.

"Hang it all! old man, don't you know I'd give my eyes for Berenice? But I tell you there is nothing to be said nothing to be done. She hasn't been

indicted and the thing will gradually blow over. You'll have to let it go at that.”

“No;” said Borrowdean determinately, “it shall not go at that. I am going to put the best private detective in London on the case.”

Max drew a prolonged whistle. “The deuce you are!”

CHAPTER XXVI

DOUBTS AND SUSPICIONS

UPON their arrival at Twin Turrets, Borrowdean handed the newspapers to Miss Egerton and warded off her rebuke for his delay in returning by giving a brief and rather incoherent account of his meeting with Lona. He left to Max all explanations of the latter's share in her disappearance and went off by himself for a quiet smoke and reflection. Berenice, he learned, had gone to bed with a headache.

He, too, felt anything but fit. Max's statement that, were he to add to his testimony at the inquest, Berenice would be further implicated, made him sick at heart. For all his increasing distrust of Max he felt that in this instance he had spoken the truth. Yet Borrowdean did not for a moment believe in Berenice's guilt; he was convinced that she was the victim of circumstantial evidence from which she could not or would not extricate herself. But how was he to prove this to the world? He determined that he would make another attempt on the morrow, perhaps when he went for Lona, to speak with Mrs. Barker's lodger, "Mr. Sartoris." Failing this, he would communicate his suspicions to Burton the detective.

But just what were his suspicions? Why simply that "Mr. Sartoris" was Greville Coningsby, Berenice's divorced husband and possibly the Red Cavalier also. Still, granting that these hypotheses were true, it would not go far toward clearing Berenice. It had been brought out fairly conclusively at the inquest that the only Cavalier who had been in the house on the night of the masked ball was Max. Although it had been suggested—and Borrowdean himself believed it was so—that the real Cavalier had been hanging about the grounds, it had by no means been proved. However, it seemed to him, since he refused to credit Berenice's guilt in spite of the cumulative evidence against her, that one of these two men in Cavalier dress was the murderer. The question was which one?

He doubted Burton's ability to handle the case alone and he intended to send a telegram early in the morning to a private detective in London, a young woman professionally known as Mercedes Quero. This young woman had established a reputation as a solver of apparently unsolvable mysteries and had distinguished herself especially in that recent "Affair at Portstead Manor." Borrowdean turned toward the library to see if there were any telegram blanks there. The door was closed and, upon opening it he was surprised to behold Ethelyn, usually the most unliterary of people, seated near the bookshelves, absorbedly bent over a ponderous tome and making pencil notes as she read. She started

somewhat guiltily as he entered and hastily closed the book.

"I am trying hard to amuse myself, Reggie," she said, affecting a little yawn. "Everybody has run away and left me."

He looked curiously at the morocco-bound volume over the title of which her tiny, ringed hands were clasped. "What were you reading, Ethie?"

"Oh, some stupid old thing not worth the printing."

He went up to her and, before she could realize what he was doing, he had taken the volume from her lap.

"Cryptography—Ancient and Modern," he read in a queer voice. "I didn't know you were interested in cypher-writing, Ethie."

She tucked the paper of pencil notes in the bosom of her dress. "But I'm not in the least interested," with another little yawn. "I took that book down at random. The cover rather attracted me—but it is hopelessly stupid. Put it back for me, Reggie, there's a dear boy."

He pushed the volume into the only empty space in the mahogany bookcase—between two equally heavy tomes on the upper shelf and was obliged to stretch his tall body to reach it.

He glanced down oddly at Miss Roydon's *petite* form. "You go to no end of trouble to take down a book at random, Ethie. How the deuce did you ever reach it?"

"What does it matter?" petulantly. "You seem to be immensely interested in that book."

He screwed in his eye-glass and studied the other titles on that shelf. "Funny thing," he commented dryly, "all the books on this shelf are about cryptography. Have you taken down any others 'at random,' Ethie?"

Ethelyn paled—she always did when angry—and her eyes took on that hard light which they had held at the inquest. "I do not understand your questions. Is it a crime for one to touch a book in this library? What makes you so disagreeable to me all the time?"

Borrowdean surveyed her reflectively. "I don't mean to be disagreeable to you, Ethie, but frankly, I think you're behaving cattishly to Berenice. What made you tell all that rot at the inquest about her quarrelling with Kassim Bardai?"

"Because I was asked—and because it was the truth."

Borrowdean lost his temper. "By Jove! you took precious good care to put as black an interpretation on it as possible."

Ethelyn rose deliberately. "Oh, I don't know about that. I might have told more—a great deal more. As it happened, I didn't walk away immediately from the window."

"I never supposed you did." Borrowdean spoke with unwonted roughness. "But whatever else

you saw couldn't have been prejudicial to Berenice or you would have told it."

"I wouldn't be too sure of that, Reggie," Ethelyn's tone cut like a lash. "Why don't you ask her all that happened?"

Borrowdean felt suddenly helpless before Ethelyn's innuendos. "She wouldn't tell me," he muttered.

"Exactly, she wouldn't tell you. Then I think that is all that need be said." Ethelyn moved to the door, carrying her small figure with an aggressive dignity. "Goodnight, Reggie. I trust you will feel better natured in the morning."

For an instant Borrowdean stood rigid, then he strode to the door. "Ethelyn! I say, Ethelyn!" he called sharply.

On the threshold he almost collided with a young male person who showed a desire to run at sight of him. But Borrowdean held his arm in a grip that could not be shaken off.

"By George!" he said slowly, "what the deuce are you doing here?"

His captive's pasty white face wore a sullen look. "Lemme go! You hurt. I'm doing no harm."

"Whom did you come here to see, eh?" Borrowdean did not relax his grasp on the youth's arm.

"Maaster Leon's" shifty, brownish eyes for a moment looked impudently into his. "Not to see you, guv'nor; that's sure."

"What seems to be the trouble, Reggie?" a rather

excited voice from the great hall suddenly demanded.

Borrowdean glanced surprisedly at Berenice who was coming toward them. He had supposed her to be in bed long since, nursing a headache. She still however, wore her dinner frock.

"I say," burst out Leon, "you tell him to let go of me."

"Reggie, let him go." There was an anxious little pucker on Berenice's forehead. "He isn't here to do any harm."

Borrowdean reluctantly loosed the boy's arm. "You know this—this chap?"

"He has been here before," she evaded, "with messages."

"To you?" Borrowdean asked with his usual directness.

"Oh, cut the questions!" said Leon airily. "I've got a right to be in this house if I choose."

He slipped past Borrowdean into the library and went out through the open terrace door.

"Berenice," said Borrowdean gravely, "I wish you would be frank with me—perhaps I could help you. I could try anyway. What kind of a mess have you gotten yourself into?"

Berenice smiled drearily. "It's a shocking mess, Reggie, and the worst of it is there is no way out."

"But, old girl, there must be—there *shall* be. If you will only tell all that happened in the library that night—"

"I shall never do that, Reggie. I couldn't." Berenice spoke in a tone of finality.

"But it is your duty to yourself. Have you seen the papers—what they are saying?"

She shook her head. "I don't want to see them. I can guess what they are saying."

"Now look here, Berenice, I've figured this all out. You're shielding somebody, that's what you are doing. And Greville Coningsby is mixed up in this, now isn't he?"

The suddenness of this thrust left her speechless for a moment. Then she said with a little laugh, "What an absurd idea, Reggie! Don't you know that Greville Coningsby is in Australia?"

Borrowdean's jaw set obstinately. "I know he is supposed to be in Australia, but I have seen him here in Yorkshire at least twice. He was the man you went to meet in that tower, Berenice, and I've a jolly strong suspicion, too, that he is that very Cavalier chap Inspector Burton would give a good deal to lay his hands on."

Berenice paled slightly. "What you say is too absurd, Reggie. But please don't say it to any one else. It—it might be believed."

"It would be," he declared with conviction.

"Then please, please don't suggest such things," she laid an appealing hand on his arm.

"You *are* shielding Coningsby then?" His voice was hard.

"I cannot have Greville accused!" she fenced. There was agony in her eyes.

Borrowdean shook off her hand. "Berenice, you don't still—you can't—love that—that cad?"

"Love Greville Coningsby?" The bitterness in her tone was extreme. She looked at Borrowdean almost with exasperation; then the sight of his troubled face caused hers to break into a smile of tender humour. "You dear, foolish — *foolish* boy!"

With a little choking laugh that sounded like a sob she hurried down the corridor toward the servants' hall. Borrowdean stared after her in a kind of hopeful bewilderment. Could she mean— Then his heart suddenly sank.

Berenice had entered Mrs. Dalrymple's room. Why was she mixed up with this woman of mystery whom many believed to be implicated in Sir Robert Grainger's death, and whose position before and after that event was, to say the least, anomalous? It was all right to be kind to Mrs. Dalrymple, of course she was to be pitied, but Berenice was something more than kind; she clearly had some understanding with the housekeeper. And the housekeeper clearly had an understanding with the Hindu butler. Now Borrowdean was certain that no good could come of anything in which a Hindu was concerned—it did not occur to him that he might be prejudiced—and the fact that Berenice had gone into Morna Dalrymple's room where she might be

drawn into even a worse mess than she already was involved in made him resolve to send off a telegram immediately to Mercedes Quero.

Berenice might consider herself under obligation, through some mistaken sense of duty, to shield Greville Coningsby, but he did not feel himself obliged to support her in this ridiculous notion. It was like Coningsby to skulk behind a woman's skirts and it was equally like Berenice to permit him to do so. She had said at the time when his misconducts had at last driven her to seek relief in divorce that she felt herself a deserter. Well, however she felt about it, she should not be permitted to sacrifice herself further for the worthless fellow who had taken the first bloom off her life.

Miss Egerton, to whom Borrowdean applied for a telegram blank, expressed approval of his resolve to send for Mercedes Quero.

"I have no personal experience of women as detectives," she said, "and it seems to me a very unusual pursuit for them to engage in. However, it's a fad for women to do very unusual things nowadays and I hear that this particular one is highly successful in her profession. Of course she is quick and intuitive. You men for the most part are slow-witted."

"Shouldn't wonder but we are," Borrowdean admitted good-naturedly, "still we are useful at times—as escorts to country houses—if nothing more, eh, Miss Egerton?"

His hostess did not smile. "I may as well confess that I have not passed one enjoyable hour here."

"It's a jolly shame," declared Borrowdean sympathetically, "that Hindu chap's being killed here, the notoriety and all."

"It isn't that. It is Max. Borrowdean, I am beginning to—to distrust Max."

"Oh, but that's—that's silly of you, Miss Egerton."

"No, it is not. You distrust him yourself. Borrowdean, if I really believed that Max was concerned, even indirectly, in Kassim Bardai's death I—" Her firm voice broke. "He is my brother's child, my heir," she finished unsteadily.

Borrowdean of a sudden became tremendously busy with his cigarette-case. "Perhaps—ah—perhaps it will not be necessary to send for Miss Quero. Burton may be slow but I daresay he will plod along very well by himself."

"No; I wish you to send for Mercedes Quero." Miss Egerton straightened, and settled her glasses decisively. "Whatever comes of her investigations I want an end to doubt—I want the truth. Let me know as soon as you receive an answer to that telegram. And, Borrowdean," she turned as she was about to ascend the stairs, "I want you to drive over to the Bay Town tomorrow and bring back that Hindu child. Tell her I shan't scold her—I have scolded Max instead. He had no business

to look up lodgings for her even if she did ask him to. He knows what I think of his conduct."

"Oh, I daresay Max meant it for a kindness," said Borrowdean, trying to be consoling.

Miss Egerton came a step nearer. Her face looked older and sharper. Her tightly-combed red hair, greying at the temples, seemed to him to show more silver threads.

"Borrowdean," her tone was almost imploring, "has it ever occurred to you that Max might have persuaded Lona to run away so that she could not be called on to testify at the inquest?"

It had occurred to him, but he hastened to assure Miss Egerton that it had not.

"Why, she was afraid of that old greybeard; that's why she ran away. It is my belief he was the one who sent her those bullets of salt. They had some meaning, you know."

"Max," said Miss Egerton harshly, "also received a bullet of salt."

Borrowdean's jaw dropped. "That's—that's a fact," he admitted helplessly.

CHAPTER XXVII

IN SIR ROBERT'S CHAMBER

It was well past midnight when Borrowdean, after sending a telegram to Mercedes Quero, went up to his room. On the way he was obliged to pass the door of the chamber which he understood had been Sir Robert Grainger's. This door had always, so far as he had noticed, been closed and presumably locked. The reason why had never interested him. If the housekeeper chose to have the chamber of her late master remain closed against intrusion, it surely was no concern of his and he was about to pass by with his usual indifference when a vague sound from within—or was it imagination—caught his ear.

He stopped and listened, even his phlegmatic temperament a little stirred as he waited there in the dark corridor, whose lights had long since been extinguished, for the repetition of an indistinct sound which suggested more than anything else the furtive scraping of wood on wood. But the noise was not repeated; on the contrary, the silence was so intense as to seem unnatural, strained, as though some one else were listening, and listening breathlessly, until his footsteps should continue down the hall. As Borrowdean stared in doubt at the door,

he fancied he could detect under the threshold a pale, very pale sliver of light as from a shaded lamp. At all events the outline of this particular doorway was certainly less obscure than that of its neighbours. And now he did hear another sound from within—a cautious step. Some one was in the room—some one who did not want his presence known.

Borrowdean laid his hand on the yielding knob. At the same instant the outlines of the door faded, became blurred into the dark walls of the corridor. The light had been put out! Borrowdean stopped only long enough to ascertain that he was well provided with matches; then he made a rather melodramatic plunge into an absolutely dark chamber whose musty odour proclaimed the fact that it was a place of disuse and avoidance. He could make out nothing in the darkness, but he knew that person of the cautious step was hiding somewhere in the shadows engulfing the room and might even elude him if he were not careful. Consequently, with little regard for quiet, he closed the door and stood with his back against it. Then he struck a match.

In its flickering glare there loomed up heavy old furniture and a high, canopied bed behind which, half-concealed by its curtains, lurked an odd-looking figure at sight of whom a Yorkshire peasant would, no doubt, have fallen to muttering prayers.

Borrowdean merely struck another match. It illuminated the plumed hat and the beribboned suit

of the person behind the bed and revealed the domino across his features.

"It's about time, Captain Coningsby, to unmask, isn't it, eh?" asked Borrowdean sternly.

Just then his second match blackened and crumpled to the floor. Before he could strike a third, the Cavalier had sprung upon him and was trying to throw him back from the door. Borrowdean, though taken by surprise, held his ground and, with a well-directed blow, reminiscent of his Oxford days, drove his assailant half across the room, where he stumbled against a chest of drawers and sprawled his length. Before he could pick himself up, Borrowdean was upon him, holding him down by the weight of his own body and warding off his counterbuffs with one hand while with the other he tore off the Cavalier's mask.

"The game is up, Coningsby, time to show your face."

In spite of the Cavalier's struggles, Borrowdean succeeded in striking another match.

"By—by Jove!" He rose slowly to his feet, unheeding the match that stung his fingers.

The Cavalier got up painfully. "Confound you! Reggie. You hit out like a prize-fighter."

"I should be glad of some explanation," said Borrowdean severely.

He went over to the fireplace and lighted one of the tall candles which he had glimpsed on the mantel. Darkness was intolerable.

Max met his accusing eyes with an easy smile. "Fooled again, old man! You never could tell me from the real Cavalier."

Borrowdean's face held a hard contempt. "I think that very few people have been able to distinguish you from the other."

Max's answering laugh was not entirely pleasant. "Never blessed with any saving sense of humour, were you, Reggie? By George! old chap, if you could have seen the way you pounced into this room and then set about pommelling me—"

"I asked you," interrupted Borrowdean sternly, "for an explanation of your being in this room in such a costume."

"Perfectly proper costume, Reggie," Max's tone was mocking. "Can't you see, old child, I was trying to have a little fun—was going to walk into Aunt Van's room and give Evans a few thrills. Instead, I thrilled you, eh?"

"What were you doing in this room?" repeated Borrowdean uncompromisingly.

Max suddenly lost his air of good-humoured raillery. His whole countenance hardened.

"Who the devil gave you the right to cross-examine me? I came into this room because I chose, and that's all you'll get for your confounded curiosity."

"I shouldn't advise you," returned Borrowdean in a cold, steady voice, "to wear that costume again either in this room or anywhere else. I don't fancy that Inspector Burton's sense of humour is much

stronger than mine and he might mistake you for that Cavalier who came out of the library shortly before Kassim Bardai's murder was discovered."

It seemed to Borrowdean that a greyish colour came over Max's features. "You mean the real Cavalier?" he asked somewhat thickly.

"I have been wondering," Borrowdean answered with deliberation, "if that man was 'the real Cavalier.'"

Max again lost his habitual self-control. "Why—why, confound you! are you daring to accuse me—"

"It is not my place to accuse you." Borrowdean turned on his heel.

Max caught him by the arm. He had forced a persuasive smile to his lips. "Hang it all! old top, we mustn't quarrel. We have been friends too long."

"I don't want to quarrel with you, Max." Borrowdean's voice was gentler. He could not forget that he had once given to Max the love that he would have given a younger brother had he possessed one. "But honestly, I don't like a host of things you have been doing lately."

"Oh, I say, I'm not as bad as you think me. You might at least give me the benefit of the doubt; you do—Berenice."

Max spoke with a whimsical boyishness which Borrowdean had never been proof against. He began to be half ashamed of his suspicions.

"I daresay I'm—I'm rather of an ass."

Max gave him an affectionate clap on the shoulder.

"That's what you are — a regular old idiot! But I'm uncommon fond of you even if you did try to batter me into jelly. Oh, by the way, Reggie, what did you mean by hailing me as 'Capt. Coningsby'?"

Borrowdean felt that it was impossible to explain this to Max. "Oh, I—I don't—know," he said lamely.

"You think Greville Coningsby is mixed up in all this, Reggie?"

"I don't know anything about Greville Coningsby. He is supposed to be in Australia."

Max gave a short laugh. "Oh, all right," he said carelessly, "be mysterious if you like. I'm off to bed. Think I'll get out of this costume. Your pommelling has rather taken away my enthusiasm for thrilling poor Evans. Whiff out the candle, old man."

Max strolled toward the door. Borrowdean, still full of misgivings as to Max's garb and his presence in this disused room, was about to blow out the candle when the door was opened suddenly from the hall. Max started to dodge back behind the curtains of the bed, but it was too late.

There was a little cry, quickly suppressed, in a woman's voice, and Morna Dalrymple, dressed as for motoring, stepped swiftly into the chamber and closed the door.

"So it was partly a trick to get me away," she began angrily. "It wasn't enough for you to share—"

Then for the first time, she saw Borrowdean stand-

ing by the mantel. She checked herself in consternation and the slight flush which anger had brought to her face faded, leaving it more colourless than ever. Max was standing with his back persistently turned toward her. His attitude seemed to make her distrustful. She glanced suspiciously from him to Borrowdean. Then she went rapidly up to Max and forced him to look at her.

"Mr. Egerton!"

"Whom did you expect it was, Mrs. Dalrymple?" demanded Borrowdean sternly.

She cringed under his gaze. Her bronze-coloured eyes were imploring. Her lips moved, but she said nothing.

Max smiled mockingly. "Took me for the real Cavalier, did you, Mrs. Dalrymple?"

His insinuating words, the hard raillery in his eyes seemed to infuriate her. Borrowdean saw again something of the tigress in her.

"I took you, Mr. Egerton, for a thief. I still take you for one."

Max said something under his breath. There was a shade of fear on his face, though his smile remained. "I suppose the charitable conclusion would be that you have allowed your nerves to run away with you."

He turned toward the door, but Mrs. Dalrymple stepped in front of him and barred his way. "I wish to know why you came into this room."

Her agitation had the effect of restoring his usual assurance. "Suppose I ask you the same question?"

Again his words stung her beyond control. "I shall take this matter to the police, Mr. Egerton."

Max surveyed her with an expression of quizzical amusement. "I don't think you'll go to the police, Mrs. Dalrymple."

Mrs. Dalrymple could not sustain his gaze. She shivered and drew back.

Max's smile broadened. With a shrug he swung on his heel and sauntered to the door.

"I'll not keep you talking longer, Mrs. Dalrymple. You must be tired after your motor ride."

Morna Dalrymple looked after him fearfully. Borrowdean felt awkward and out of place.

"Hadn't you better turn in?" he suggested finally. "Of course you are tired."

"Lord Borrowdean," she said with emphasis, "I have not been motoring tonight. I could not sleep—thinking of the inquest and all—so I went out on the cliffs to walk. The wind was so strong that I wore a hat and veil. Mr. Egerton was mistaken."

Borrowdean had little faith in her explanation, but he had not the heart to call it into question. She seemed to be almost dropping from nerve exhaustion, so he simply suggested again that she go to her chamber and try to sleep.

"Lord Borrowdean," she asked with searching intentness, "why did you come into this room?"

Because it appeared the best thing to do, he told her the truth: that he had heard sounds which had made him suspect some one was in this disused chamber.

"What sort of sounds?" she urged, nervously.

"Why—er—footsteps."

"No other sounds? You are quite sure?"

"It is difficult to distinguish sounds at night," he evaded. "It was the footsteps that made me come in."

She gave a sigh of despair. "Of course you will not tell me—Mr. Egerton is your friend."

She stepped into the corridor and Borrowdean followed. She then closed and locked the door with one of a bunch of keys which she took from a small hand-bag.

Borrowdean watched her curiously. "Does Miss Egerton desire this room to be locked?"

"I do not know what Miss Egerton desires." There was hostility in Mrs. Dalrymple's voice. "But this was Sir Robert Grainger's room; he would not wish people poking about in it; he did not allow even the servants to enter."

She turned abruptly as though to avoid further discussion and hurried down the corridor.

Borrowdean went on to his own chamber. A subdued purring sound outside drew him to the window. There he saw a long, low motor-car gliding almost noiselessly away from the house. Apparently Mrs. Dalrymple had returned from a motor-ride, after all. It was now sufficiently near dawn for him to make out the figure of the chauffeur, and there was something in the youthfulness of his appearance and the rakish tilt of his cap which suggested "Maaster Leon."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE CAVALIER UNMASKED

THE next morning Borrowdean and Berenice drove over to the Bay Town to bring Lona home. Max, despite his half promise to the young Hindu girl, did not accompany them. Instead, he went for a ramble over the moors with Ethelyn.

Borrowdean had purposely refrained from telling Berenice to which house they were going and when he would have led her up the doorsteps, she drew back, startled.

"Reggie," with direct reproach, "I did not suppose you would try to lay a trap for me. Of course I do not need to tell you that I should not have come here had I not supposed it was to see Lona."

Borrowdean flushed uncomfortably under her pained look, but the consciousness of the integrity of his motives gave firmness to his voice as he answered:

"I won't deny that I am trying to pry into your affairs, but I think you know why I am doing this; and it is the truth that Lona is in this house and wanted you to come with me."

"Reggie," Berenice's voice was low and decided, "If Greville Coningsby is accused of Kassim Bardai's murder, I shall stand with him. He is not more guilty than I."

"Berenice!"

"I mean it, Reggie, Now let us go in to Lona."

It seemed to Borrowdean that Mrs. Barker's appearance was more unprepossessing than ever. He fancied, too, that she looked at Berenice with a glint of recognition in her furtive eyes. This time she was not inhospitable and her-manner was unctuously propitiating.

The young lady he asked for was to be found in her room; she never went out in the daytime.

Would he and the lady like to go upstairs at once?

Borrowdean signified that they would. On the first landing he intercepted a glance of understanding between Mrs. Barker and Berenice. A feeling of deadness weighed upon him. He could not understand Berenice nor her quixotic devotion—if it were no more—to Greville Coningsby. As they passed Miss Wilton's door, he saw that it was tightly closed and he wondered if, when she heard voices in Lona's room, she would gratify her curiosity by peering through the peep-hole in the wall.

Several knocks, increasingly vigorous, on Lona's door eliciting no response, Mrs. Barker shook the handle which turned readily. The room presented an appearance of disorder and confusion which Borrowdean had not observed the evening before when he had looked into it through Miss Wilton's point of vantage. A couple of chairs were overturned, a small glass jar lay broken on the floor, its shattered bits of crystal sending forth a peculiar, heavy fra-

grance as of exotic flowers, a little white slipper stood nearby, its mate not visible, and the coverlets of the bed were tossed back as though its occupant had sprung from it in haste. Of Lona herself there was no sign.

"T' yoong laady mun ha' gone out, aafter arl," suggested Mrs. Baker, her eyes meeting no one's.

"Without dressing herself, with nothing over her night clothes?" Berenice pointed to a neat little pile of lingerie on a chair in the corner and to a thin white frock, limp and rain-soiled, hanging from a peg on the wall.

"She mun ha' had oother clothes," volunteered Mrs. Barker.

Berenice dismissed the suggestion with impatience. "I believe the poor child has been forcibly taken off in the night. What do you know about this, Mrs. Barker?"

The landlady cringed under Berenice's accusing gaze and broke out into protestations of her ignorance of the entire matter. The house had been quiet all night; there had been absolutely no sound of disturbance and no one had entered it—of that she was sure for she slept in a front room on the ground-floor—since "t' yoong laady herself had come baack."

At this juncture a violent ringing of the door-bell below afforded Mrs. Barker an excuse for going downstairs and so avoiding further questioning—an excuse of which she immediately availed herself.

"I think," remarked Berenice, "that here is another

proof that Lona was forcibly taken off. She would not have left this."

Berenice indicated a photograph of Max, encased in a satin frame and standing erect in solitary state, on the top of the battered old bureau.

"Poor little girl," she said softly, "I am afraid she has been very foolish. Max ought to be ashamed of himself."

The bare little lodging-house room revealed no further clues as to the manner of Lona's disappearance nor her present whereabouts. Once again the young girl had utterly disappeared. Borrowdean felt that Max this time could not be held responsible, but this fact only increased his apprehensions. Lona, seemingly, had been carried off by force and he could not forget those bullets of salt which appeared to presage some evil threatening her. He had no doubt that she possessed knowledge of her brother's death and it was not unlikely that she had been carried off either to insure her silence or to make her divulge this knowledge. Either supposition seemed equally tenable since Lona admitted that she feared to be questioned by Chand Talsdad. If that implacable old chap suspected that she had knowledge which might solve the mystery of the death of his compatriot, the man on whom he had built all his hopes for the glorification of India, he would stop at nothing to make her speak. Borrowdean had heard of the tortures resorted to by the Hindus in crimes like this. What would one poor little life count for when

weighed in the balance against the epoch-making enterprises which stirred the soul of Brahma's servitor?

Before going downstairs Borrowdean knocked at Miss Wilton's door. She ought to know something of Lona's disappearance. But Miss Wilton either was not in her room or was unwilling to be questioned. Borrowdean, after several vain attempts to elicit a response, turned away from the locked door which piqued his interest to the point of irritation. It was then he discovered that Berenice had quietly slipped away without a word of explanation. He hurried down both flights of stairs, hoping to catch a glimpse of her in one of the halls, but he was unsuccessful. She had evidently entered one of the closed rooms which must, of course, have been known to her. At that moment he would have given much to be able to hand Greville Coningsby over to the police.

Mrs. Barker was cowering against the newel-post in the entry-hall answering in frightened monosyllables the questions put to her by a stockily-built man in a tweed suit. This individual bore the unmistakable stamp of the police official. Since the commencement of Miss Egerton's house party, Borrowdean had become unpleasantly familiar with the type. He had no desire to stay longer in this house—if Berenice chose to conceal herself, he would not attempt to find her—so he went toward the outer door.

Mrs. Barker's inquisitor, after a comprehensive

glance which included the minutest details of Borrowdean's appearance, tipped his hat politely and addressed him by name. The notoriety which Borrowdean had gained as one of the guests at Twin Turrets was highly offensive to him and he returned the official's salutation with scant cordiality.

The detective chose not to take offense. "I saw your lordship come in here. I have a telegram for you. It came in just as I was sending off one myself."

Borrowdean took the pink envelope held out to him; he turned it over with a frown. "This has been opened."

The detective smiled blandly. "A little official liberty, my lord."

"A piece of confounded impertinence, I call it."

"That's just as you look at it, my lord. To me it's all in the day's work."

Borrowdean gave a short laugh. "Didn't find much incriminating evidence in it, did you?"

The detective laughed, too. "I wasn't exactly looking for it, my lord—just professional curiosity. But, I say, if you are going to meet the lady—your lordship'll excuse my mentioning it—you'd better be stepping. She's always on time and she don't like to be kept waiting. Burton," he added confidentially, "will be hot when he finds out she is going on the case. Jealousy, I call it. Now I," with expansive magnanimity, "don't feel that way about

her. She don't do bad for a woman. No, by George! she's devilish smart."

Borrowdean lost no time in entering the inn opposite, where the telegram from Mercedes Quero had stated that he would find her at ten o'clock, the hour which was just striking. The inn brought back unpleasant memories of the inquest and he made his way as quickly as possible to the back parlour, designated by Mercedes Quero as their meeting-place.

In answer to his knock, the door was opened by a young woman, at sight of whom he stood for a moment speechless.

"Miss Wilton!" he exclaimed at length.

Her brown eyes were mirthful. "You didn't expect to meet me so soon again, did you, Lord Borrowdean?"

"I beg your pardon,"—he turned to withdraw—"I must have made a mistake in the room. I expected to meet a—another lady—"

"Mercedes Quero, perhaps?" smiled Miss Walton.

He stared. "My telegram must have become public property."

Miss Wilton's look of amusement grew. "Not necessarily—I am Mercedes Quero."

"You will pardon me, Miss Wilton," he said stiffly, "but I am not in the mood, nor have I the time, for joking."

Miss Wilton laughed. "You don't believe me, eh? Will this convince you?" She drew from a silver

mesh bag the telegram which he had sent the evening before.

In the face of this he could no longer disbelieve and yet this slim, girlishly pretty young woman with mirthful brown eyes, skin fair as a child's and soft brown hair simply coiled in her neck was not at all his idea of the detective who had already won an enviable name in her chosen profession.

The pseudo "Miss Wilton" appeared to find his puzzlement highly diverting. "Am I so very very different from what you expected? Is the disappointment too great to be borne? I am afraid the prying 'Miss Wilton' made an unfavourable impression upon you."

"Why, no, not at all—now that I understand. I—I am delighted to—to have met you before."

She laughed again—a low, amused laugh. "Really, you almost make me believe you mean that." She stood a second surveying him.

He remained grave and silent, slowly drawing off his gloves.

"Lord Borrowdean," the mirth died from her eyes, her tone became crisp and business-like, "you wish to employ me to unravel the mystery at Twin Turrets, and particularly, I understood from your telegram, to clear the name of Lady Berenice Coningsby in spite of herself."

"That is so," he assented. "I believe that you alone can do this."

"Perhaps," she agreed with a calm confidence that

was by no means vanity or arrogance, "but I cannot at present undertake to do this. As a matter of fact, I am already at work on the case; my employer is the Hindu priest, Chand Talsdad, and the clearing of Lady Berenice's name is of little importance to him. When a prince of India has been murdered, the Azra El Kab ruby stolen, and a princess abducted, what does the tarnishing of a mere Englishwoman's name matter to him?"

"But," Borrowdean urged, "have you not discovered anything in your investigations so far which might clear her?"

Mercedes Quero shook her head. "Ah! no, Lord Borrowdean, I cannot give away professional secrets. The results of my investigations belong to Chand Talsdad and to the proper officials, and that, too, only when I think it wise to make them known."

"But you don't think her guilty as that—that ass of a Burton does?"

The detective's brown eyes danced. "You have expressed precisely my opinion of Mr. Burton. No! Lord Borrowdean, I shall not say one word more."

She had no opportunity to do so. The door was torn open and a slender, wiry man, hatless, and with the look of a hunted creature plunged into the room. At sight of Mercedes Quero, he uttered an oath of consternation and made a movement to dart out again.

The detective, however, was too quick for him. She sprang to the door, closed it, and levelled upon

him the barrel of a tiny revolver, not more than four inches long and mounted with mother-of-pearl.

"Surely you cannot wish to leave us so soon, Capt. Coningsby?"

The excited voices of men in the room beyond maddened Coningsby. He looked with desperation at the slim young woman, coolly holding him prisoner. Borrowdean placed himself by Miss Quero's side, her girlish figure accentuating his height and the broadness of his shoulders.

Coningsby hesitated a second, calculating. Then, ducking his head, he leaped toward the window. The toy revolver flashed fire. Coningsby, with a scream of pain, threw himself through the closed window, the glass splintering and cutting.

Mercedes Quero calmly replaced the little revolver in the silver-mesh bag whence she had snatchd it. "Capt. Coningsby will not row very far. His right arm is useless. Ah! Mr. Burton"—as that official and two subordinates precipitated themselves into the room—"you are a trifle late; our friend has just gone out through the window."

Burton and his two satellites, with a fine disregard for splintered glass, vaulted over the window-sill upon the bastion on which the inn was built.

Mercedes Quero went swiftly into the hall and thence out onto the bastion. Borrowdean followed. Some yards beyond the sea-wall a flat-bottomed, red row-boat was tossing at anchor. Toward it a man was swimming, struggling on with one-armed

strokes. At that moment Burton, throwing off his coat and vest, dove into the water and with long, reaching strokes, began to pursue the one-armed swimmer. His subordinates, shouting encouragement, laid bets on him as the winner.

Borrowdean felt his arm seized in a convulsive grasp. Turning, he looked into the despairing face of Berenice.

"Reggie! That is Greville—out there in the water. I did my best, but I couldn't save him. Burton knew too much. Oh, he—he is going un-der! He will drown before our eyes!"

Borrowdean tried to draw her toward the inn. "Come away, Berenice. You can do no good."

She shook her head. "I must see it through. Reggie!"—her voice suddenly rising to a scream—"he has capsized the boat—he has gone down—*under* it!"

Borrowdean forcibly drew her away now and she submitted like one whose endurance was utterly broken down.

When Burton, dripping and panting—as a swimmer he was not in practice—was pulled out of the water by his two subordinates, the red row-boat was drifting out to sea, bottom side up. Of Coningsby there was no trace.

A half-hour or so later his body was recovered. Efforts at resuscitation proved fruitless, but were maintained, at Berenice's urgency, long after every hope of reviving life had been abandoned. It pained

Borrowdean to observe that she seemed to consider herself in some way responsible for Coningsby's death.

Burton, on the other hand, accepted his responsibility with an exultant air which was decidedly unpleasant.

"I'll confess," he remarked confidentially, "that when I started out some weeks ago to trail the Red Cavalier, I didn't expect to bag so big a game."

Mercedes Quero regarded him with interest. "What do you mean by so big a game, Mr. Burton?"

Burton expanded under the stimulant of success. He even condescended to become facetious. "Oh, come now, Miss Quero, you ain't so blind as you're trying to make out. Didn't I tell you I was working on a double trail?"

"Why yes," she assented, "but I understood you to say that there was a petticoat at one end of this double trail."

Borrowdean listened apprehensively. He was glad that Berenice had gone from the room.

Burton's manner became increasingly pompous and assured. "Now I don't give away the inner workings of a case any more than you do, Miss Quero. When I said there was a petticoat at one end of the trail, I meant a little more than that. The petticoat was shielding some one. Begin to see a little glimmer of light, eh?"

Mercedes Quero regarded him with a curious smile. "No, Mr. Burton, I am still hopelessly in the dark."

The look Burton gave her was almost pitying. "Well, I'm hanged! Miss Quero, I gave you credit for at least being able to put two and two together."

"Yes?" her voice was dangerously sweet, "and what do *you* make of two plus two, Mr. Burton?"

Burton scowled. He had learned to distrust that tone of voice. "What's the use of beating about the bush? Scotland Yard has come out on top—as it always will in the long run. While you've been eliminating suspects, I've run down *my* suspect and bagged two birds in one."

"What two birds, Mr. Burton?"

His scowl deepened under her mocking eyes. "Why, confound it all! the Red Cavalier and the murderer of Kassim Bardai. They are one and the same—Coningsby!"

It was Mercedes Quero's turn now to look pitying. "My dear Mr. Burton, isn't it possible that you have mistaken your vocation? Your conclusions are as far from being correct—"

Burton lost his temper. "Any one must be a bally idiot who can't see that Coningsby was the Red Cavalier and—"

"Of course, he was the Red Cavalier. Any amateur would have discovered that immediately, but he was no more the murderer of Kassim Bardai than I."

Burton looked positively savage. "If you know so much more than Scotland Yard, perhaps you will be good enough to tell—"

Mercedes Quero smiled gently. "Like you, Mr.

Burton, I do not give away the inner workings of a case, but, I assure you, you have still to discover the person or persons who killed Kassim Bardai, stole the Azra El Kab ruby, and the paper in cypher, and abducted the little Hindu Princess."

CHAPTER XXIX

ON THE TRAIL

It was sundown before Borrowdean and Berenice returned to Twin Turrets. The latter had been harried with questions by the detectives who, under Burton's lead, had tried, but vainly, to make her incriminate herself as the confederate of the Cavalier and the sharer of his spoils. Mercedes Quero finally rescued her from these inquisitors—they, like Burton, were still inclined to believe Coningsby guilty also of Prince Kassim's death—and requested a seat in the wagonette as she wished to make some investigations at Twin Turrets.

During this drive a sympathetic understanding began to establish itself between Berenice and the detective. Mercedes Quero did not hector Berenice with questions, but tried to divert her mind by talking entertainingly on general topics. Borrowdean learned from their conversation that Berenice had met the detective previously in the character of "Miss Wilton."

As they came within sight of the twin turrets, Mercedes Quero's face became grave.

"I am sorry, very sorry for Miss Egerton," she said musingly, more to herself than to her two companions.

Berenice flashed a peculiar glance at the detective. "Why are you sorry for Miss Egerton?"

Mercedes Quero bit her lip as though regretting her words. Her voice was emotionless and wholly professional as she answered:

"Because of the notoriety this affair has brought upon her. It is, of course, very distressing."

Miss Egerton received the detective with correct courtesy which, however, was not cordiality. Her manner made it clear that she disliked Miss Quero's profession and considered it reprehensible for a woman to follow it. On the other hand, Miss Egerton was unwontedly gracious in her reception of Berenice. The news of the identity of the Red Cavalier and of his death had reached Twin Turrets and Miss Egerton found it impossible not to feel pity for Berenice as being more or less his victim. Berenice showed herself touched by this sympathy.

Borrowdean wished that the ability to express his emotions had been vouchsafed to him. There was so much his heart prompted him to say, and yet he sat now by Berenice's side, as he had sat during the drive back to Twin Turrets, in awkward silence, finding no word to say.

Miss Egerton handed to Mercedes Quero a note enclosed in an envelope of thick, foreign paper.

"This was brought here for you."

The detective broke the seal and read the note, a little frown gathering between her brows.

"It is from Chand Talsdad. He fears that I am

cooling in the chase. He intends to pay his respects to you this evening, Miss Egerton, and, incidentally, to give me my *congé* unless I have some information to impart to him. Oh, I do not blame him for feeling as he does. My progress in this case has been slow. But, you see, there were so many threads to pick up and I wanted to be sure. By the way, Miss Egerton, I should like a few words with your interesting house-keeper."

"Mrs. Dalrymple has been confined in her room all day with a headache," observed Miss Egerton.

"I will go to her then," said Mercedes Quero gravely. "She must be told of Capt. Coningsby's death—if she does not already know."

Berenice unexpectedly intervened. "Couldn't you let the poor woman rest until morning? She may know already—through Leon. But if she does not know, it will be a terrible shock. I think she really loved him."

The detective's expression softened. "I think she did. I suppose it is her justification. But I must speak with her tonight; a little later will do just as well, however. Miss Egerton, will you ask your nephew to come here, please?"

"My nephew!"

"Yes; there are questions he must answer."

Borrowdean and Berenice exchanged swift glances. The same suspicion had come to both.

Miss Egerton bristled with indignation, but her cheeks were a little greyish.

"Surely, you are not accusing my nephew—"

"At present I am accusing no one," said the detective gently. "I want simply to ask your nephew certain questions. Please send for him, Miss Egerton."

Max entered the detective's presence with his confident air, his mocking smile. Ethelyn, on the contrary, who accompanied him, showed perturbation. Max's surprise at beholding "Miss Wilton" metamorphosed into a detective was by no means as great as Borrowdean's had been and he carried off the situation lightly.

"I knew that you were something more than an ordinary woman, Miss Quero. You interested me from the first."

"The interest was mutual then," she smiled. "You have been in my thoughts very frequently the last few days, Mr. Egerton."

"You flatter me, Miss Quero." His eyes laughed into hers.

"Not at all; I am speaking seriously." Her tone hardened. "My interest in you has been so intense that on the day before the inquest I went up to London on the same train which you took."

Max's audacious glance fell, the lines of his mouth stiffened. His voice, however, was still bantering as he said:

"By George! if I had only known it, we would have had a jolly entertaining ride together. I say, Miss Quero, why didn't you make yourself known?"

The detective looked him straight in the eye. "Because I feared that if I did, it might cause you to postpone your business interview with Mr. Jermayne of Tottenham Court Road."

Max smothered an ejaculation. His face was ashen.

Ethelyn suddenly stepped before him. Her eyes, of a harder blue than ever, flashed hate at the detective.

"I do not know what you mean by all this, Miss Quero. Mr. Egerton went to see Mr. Jermayne at my request. He was kind enough to try to raise money for me on some old jewelry which had belonged to my mother."

Mercedes Quero turned her searching gaze on Ethelyn. "How did your mother happen to have in her possession the Azra El Kab ruby, Miss Roydon?"

The silence in the room was intense. Miss Egerton, alone, was not looking at Ethelyn, white and defiant, but at Max who had forced to his lips a trace of his old careless smile. A bitter conviction was struggling into being on Miss Egerton's face.

Ethelyn collected herself. "Your question is absurd, Miss Quero. Of course the Azra El Kab ruby was never in my mother's possession."

"In that case then," shot back the detective, "Mr. Egerton was trying to dispose of stolen property."

At this Ethelyn completely lost control of herself. She burst into a storm of denial and vituperation.

Borrowdean laid a kindly hand on her arm. "Better not say any more, Ethie."

Miss Egerton addressed herself to Max who had preserved silence. "If you have any explanation to offer, you will oblige me by stating it."

Max fought hard to regain his nonchalance of bearing. "My blessed Aunt, I could give you a dozen, only, you see, I prefer to have Ethie—"

Miss Egerton cut him short. "That is sufficient. Do not put the responsibility of your crimes on a woman. It is bad enough to be a thief—and a murderer!" Her voice shook in spite of herself.

"I am no murderer!" Max cried sharply.

Berenice rose in agitation. "No! You are not that, Max."

"We cannot be too sure of that," said the detective coldly. "It is impossible for Mr. Egerton to prove his innocence. Circumstantial evidence declares him the murderer of Prince Kassim Bardai. He had incentive and opportunity. Oh, let me finish, Miss Roydon. You will not help the case against Mr. Egerton. His appalling debts were his incentive, and his opportunity—you all know he had that. He was absent from the ballroom a considerable part of the evening and he was twice seen, in his Cavalier costume, to come out from the library where Kassim Bardai was murdered."

"See here," burst out Max, "you seem to forget that this chap who came out from the library could just as likely have been the real Cavalier."

"That is impossible, Mr. Egerton. If he had been the real Cavalier, he could not have gone into the ball-room unmasked and mingled with the guests as this man—as *you* did, Mr. Egerton. You cannot prove an alibi and the fact that you were detected trying to sell the ruby stolen from the murdered man would be sufficient for any jury to convict you."

Max's lips wore still their persistent smile—though now a wholly cynical and sneering one. He had always prided himself on being a philosophical loser. He meant to keep up his reputation.

"By Jove! Miss Quero, you present the paradox of a pretty woman and a logician combined. But—your conclusions are wrong. I did not kill Kassim Bardai."

Mercedes Quero smiled satirically. "Didn't you, Mr. Egerton? I don't believe that you would care to stand trial—against my logic. I think what you want is not justice—but mercy. What will you trade for mercy, Mr. Egerton?"

Max fell in with her humour. "Have I anything left to trade?" his tone bantering.

"You have that bone of contention, the paper in cypher which, by the way, was not stolen from you at all."

"You're jolly clever, aren't you, Miss Quero?" Max was careful not to glance in his aunt's direction.

"It is my business to be 'jolly clever,' Mr. Egerton. Well, what do you say? Shall we trade?"

"She is trying to trap you," warned Ethelyn in a low, tense voice.

Mercedes Quero caught the words. "I am not trying to trap him. I do not need to. I offer him in exchange for that paper in cypher—which he has found useless—an opportunity to make his escape from the country. Otherwise he will be charged with the murder of Prince Kassim. I think he realizes the impossibility of proving his innocence. It is for him to choose."

Max's *sangfroid* was unshaken. "You've got me fair and square, Miss Quero. If I do give up this bone of contention, can you assure me safe conduct from the country?"

"I can. I have considered and planned everything. There is a train leaving for London within an hour which you can catch. At London you should be able to make the early morning boat train for—well, I should advise, Australia."

Max's eyelids stretched wide in dismay. "Australia!"

The detective nodded. "I should say that Australia was the safest refuge for you. Your debts, I understand, have made you rather too familiar a figure on the Continent. Australia will be new ground for you."

Max made a wry face. "Deuced dull ground—but, oh, well! I'll try it for a few years till this affair blows over."

"I think you are wise, Mr. Egerton. The paper

in cypher, please, and really you haven't many minutes to lose. I have taken the liberty of ordering a carriage. It should be waiting for you now."

Still with imperturbable nonchalance, Max drew from an inner pocket the paper in cypher and, with a mock bow, tendered it to Mercedes Quero.

During this time Miss Egerton had spoken no word. Only the grey rigidity of her features showed that she was suffering.

Max turned to her now, his smile growing whimsical. "Aren't you going to wish me 'bon voyage,' Aunt Van?"

Miss Egerton raised her eyes. The scorn in her gaze withered the smile on his lips. "I am going to wish that I may forget I ever had a nephew."

Max turned away sharply, with a hard laugh. "And what are you going to wish me, Berenice? A short road to perdition?"

Berenice took his hand impulsively in both her own. There was a great pity in her face.

"I am going to wish that you will pull yourself together and live a different life. You can do it if you will."

"It is too late for that," his voice a little unsteady, his smile more regretful than bitter. "If I had loved you years ago—and you could have given me *your* love—" He broke off abruptly, a mask of cynicism hardening his face. "Miss Quero will be reminding me that I haven't the time for sentimental rot. So long, Berenice, old girl!" He wrung her hand con-

vulsively, released it and, with an indifferent nod at Borrowdean and Ethelyn, sauntered leisurely toward the door.

At last Borrowdean found his voice. It was his friend of long-standing, his boyhood's playmate, who was being banished thus in disgrace.

"Max," he said huskily, "I wish you the best of luck! I'd like awfully to hear from you."

Max turned, his eyes bitter, his mouth hard. "I'll not need to wish you luck. As for writing, I don't fancy there'll be much news to chronicle from the wilds of Australia. So long, everybody!"

Ethelyn suddenly ran forward and caught his arm beseechingly. Her eyes now were softly lustrous.

"Max, let me go with you!"

Max turned surprisedly. "Don't you understand I'm ruined—a Pariah?"

"What does that matter to me? Max, take me with you!"

"Ethelyn," interposed Borrowdean, "I don't think you quite realize—"

Ethelyn stamped her foot. "Be still, Reggie! I realize that Max is being driven into a strange land—disgraced you call it—well, what does disgrace matter to me? I want to be with him—anywhere—I don't care where—so that I am with him. Max, you will take me?"

Ethelyn trembled with the intensity of her emotion as, with flushed cheeks and beseeching eyes, she begged to be allowed to share disgrace and exile

with the man who had long ago tired of her and had been at no pains to conceal the fact. Borrowdean was touched by the devotion and self-sacrifice of one whom he had always known as a Becky Sharp. Great indeed must be her love for Max thus to transform her.

Max surveyed her coolly, appraisingly. Borrowdean grew hot with indignation.

"Ethie," he pleaded, "think twice; don't ruin your life."

Ethelyn utterly ignored him. She was fighting for a few hours of happiness; she would not think of what must inevitably follow—knowing Max as she did. The clasp of her hand on his arm tightened; her eyes were full of passionate appeal; she swayed against him. "Take me with you!"

Max continued to survey her appraisingly. In the stress of her emotion she looked uncommonly pretty. His own eyes lighted—but not with tenderness; his mocking smile deepened.

"Of course, I'll take you, Ethie, if you are so set on going. I'm bound to be deuced lonely out in the wilds."

Ethelyn did not shrink at the brutality of his words. She had gained what she sought. She knew it was dross, but it was what she wanted.

Borrowdean, however, gave Max a glance of hopeless contempt. He forgot their long years of friendship and remembered only the pitiful little Hindu girl whose love Max had stolen for his own selfish

gains, and now here was another woman on whose misplaced devotion he meant to batten and divert himself until, once more satiated, he cast her off again.

"Max," he said with conviction, "you're no end of a bounder."

Max shrugged indifferently. "You are frank, to say the least. Ethie, shall we make our adieux?"

Miss Egerton stood up. "Wait a moment. I hope I know my duty by my brother's son. If you communicate with my bankers they will see that you are supplied with money, sufficient for necessities."

"Thanks, Aunt Van," responded Max coolly. "I shall probably be forced to avail myself of your bounty. My assets at present are *nil*. Come along, Ethie."

As the door closed behind them, Miss Egerton sank into her chair. She looked old and worn.

"Reginald," she said unsteadily—she had not called Borrowdean by his first name since he was a boy—"I am going back to Cavendish Square to-morrow or the next day. I hope you will come to see me often. I shall be lonely—at first—until I get used to having no nephew."

Borrowdean pressed her hand. He could not seem to find anything to say.

Berenice went over to Miss Egerton and said, a little timidly, "I wish that sometime I might come with Reggie."

Miss Egerton hastily passed her handkerchief

across her eyes. "Please do; I should like to have you."

Mercedes Quero stepped forward. Her face like Berenice's was gentle and sympathetic.

"Miss Egerton, perhaps you are thinking a little more hardly of your nephew than you need to. With your permission I am going to ask Mrs. Dalrymple and Ahmed the butler to come here. This case is by no means closed."

CHAPTER XXX

THE EYES OF BRAHMA

THE detective had scarcely finished speaking when Ahmed affrightedly ushered in Chand Talsdad. The old Hindu was in a state of agitation bordering on frenzy. He forgot altogether the courtesy due Miss Egerton and addressed himself solely to Mercedes Quero.

"I come to give you dismissal. You neglect my interests. You let a thief escape—the man who has stolen the Azra El Kab ruby. As I enter the house I see him, the thief, riding away like—'like mad,' as you English say, in a motor cab. I demand the explanation!"

Mercedes Quero sustained the East Indian's furious eyes with provoking calm. "Perhaps I have misunderstood your object in engaging my services. Was it the apprehension of the murderer of Kassim Bardai or simply the recovery of the Azra El Kab ruby—and its mate?"

"And its mate?" Miss Egerton, Borrowdean and Berenice stared at the detective in amazement.

Ahmed's dark face paled. Chand Talsdad scrutinized the detective in a curious, reflective fashion. "You have found then the stolen paper and you have the knowledge of cypher writing?"

"Yes. Naturally so, since I am a detective."

The East Indian continued to study her quiet face. "And the mate of the Azra El Kab, it is safe?"

"I presume so. The person into whose possession this paper came was unable to decipher the location of its hiding-place."

"But the Azra El Kab itself, where is that?" The light of fanaticism shone now in the old priest's eyes.

Mercedes Quero smiled reassuringly. "The Azra El Kab is under the protection of representatives of Scotland Yard. It did not seem safe in the shop of the London jeweler where it was offered for sale. The person offering the ruby did not think it prudent to carry so costly a jewel about on his person and preferred to leave it in Mr. Jermayne's care in exchange for a rather substantial sum on credit until that gentleman could beg, borrow—or possibly steal—the entire amount demanded. To make the ruby doubly safe, I decided to take it out of Mr. Jermayne's hands and put it in those of Scotland Yard. You need not be apprehensive, Chand Talsdad, the ruby will not be stolen again."

The old Hindu shook with emotion. "You are aware, of course, that both rubies belong to me as the priest of Brahma. They must be restored at once."

Mercedes Quero gave a little shrug. "That is not my province, but I rather fancy that you will have

to apply to the Government for permission to remove them from the country."

The Hindu's features were convulsed with a righteous wrath. "There was no permission asked when the mate of the Azra El Kab was stolen fourteen years ago by Sir Robert Grainger from the image of supreme Brahma in the temple at Delhi."

The mention of Brahma caused Ahmed to cower as Borrowdean had once seen Lona do.

Mercedes Quero made a little deprecatory gesture. "However that may be, the ruby has been so long in this country and is of such inestimable value that you will find complications in attempting to remove it."

Chand Talsdad towered above her in his wrath. "You English cannot understand. The Azra El Kab and its mate formed the eyes of the image of Brahma. Sir Robert Grainger's crime was more than theft; it was desecration—sacrilege! Outraged Brahma can be appeased only by the restoration of both rubies."

Borrowdean put up his monocle. "Sir Robert Grainger, as I understand, stole only one eye. Then why the deuce did you or Kassim Bardai blind the old chap entirely by taking out his other eye and parading up and down England with it? Wasn't that sacrilege, eh?"

Borrowdean was not familiar with Hindustanee, but, from the force of Chand Talsdad's delivery, he was able to comprehend vaguely the old East Indian's

opinion of himself and other scoffers at the true religion.

After a moment Brahma's priest controlled himself and said in his slow, stilted, but none the less impressive, English: "You shall be made to understand. The royal House of Bardai for generations have had under their special protection the temple of supreme Brahma at Delhi. To guard this temple has been esteemed their highest prerogative. But when the English descended upon India and subjugated her proudest princes, Selik Bardai, the grandfather of Prince Kassim, forgot the past glory of his race, consorted with the English usurpers and made no effort to shake off the foreign yoke. Mareluke, his son, forgot still more his high duties. He welcomed, he cherished, the insidious poison of the West"—Chand Talsdad's burning gaze, bitter to the point of accusation, was fixed now upon Berenice, as though in her he saw the epitome of that "insidious Western poison."

"This poison so entered Mareluke's veins," the old priest went on, in a voice of suppressed fury, "that for his English myrmidons and English gold he was willing to betray his great trust, the prerogative of his House, the guarding of Brahma's shrine. He would have money and more money to fling at the feet of English houris. He would not himself violate Brahma, for he was a coward as all traitors are, but he would give to another the opportunity to do so. This other was Sir Robert Grainger. For

years this man had been robbing the men of India and outraging their gods. It was agreed between the traitor Mareluke and this perfidious foreigner that a certain door of Brahma's temple which could be entered only by the head of the House of Bardai should be left unguarded one night. Through this door Sir Robert Grainger was to enter the temple and steal the two sacred rubies which formed the eyes of Brahma. The proceeds from the sale of these holy jewels was to be divided between Mareluke and the Englishman. At the eleventh hour Mareluke came to realize the atrocity of the crime that was about to occur. He dared not confide in the priests of Brahma and call them to the aid of the god who was about to be desecrated, so he went alone to prevent the crime. Well, he was unsuccessful. The consciousness of his baseness robbed him of strength and he was stabbed to the heart by his English friend on the threshold of Brahma's shrine.

"Sir Robert Grainger, fearing discovery, stayed only long enough to remove one sacred eye. Some hours later I found Mareluke dying. At the feet of the violated Brahma he poured out his confession. From that day a curse has rested on the House of Bardai. The restoration of the stolen ruby alone can remove it. From the hour of Mareluke's death I took his young son, Prince Kassim, under my charge and forced him to vow his life to the appeasing of Brahma and the restoration of the past glory

of his race. In order that he might never forget his high mission, I removed the remaining eye of Brahma and placed it on his breast where its red fire did not cease to burn him until the night it was stolen in the midst of that Western poison which had been his father's undoing."

Again the Hindu's gaze, bitterly contemptuous, settled on Berenice, who shivered a little.

Borrowdean was stirred to anger. "I shouldn't say, Miss Quero, that we had far to look for the murderer of Sir Robert Grainger."

"You are wrong," said Chand Talsdad authoritatively. "It is true that Kassim Bardai at my tutelage was destined to be the instrument of Sir Robert Grainger's death, but he was cheated of his vengeance and his hope of recovering at the same time the sacred ruby."

Borrowdean grew nettled and even apprehensive at observing how Chand Talsdad continued to glower at Berenice.

Miss Egerton was strangely silent; she had sat in a sort of apathy since Max's departure.

Mercedes Quero broke the general silence which had fallen when Chand Talsdad ceased speaking.

"I am going to question Mrs. Dalrymple now. No, Ahmed," as the butler made a swift movement toward the door—"I wish you to remain here. Lord Borrowdean, may I ask you to tell Mrs. Dalrymple that I must speak to her here?"

Ahmed flashed a furtive, miserable look at Chand

Talsdad, but the old priest did not deign to glance in his direction.

Borrowdean was obliged to knock several times on Mrs. Dalrymple's door before he received any response. Then there was the sound of some inner door opening and closing, and dragging steps crossing the room. Borrowdean was moved to pity at sight of Mrs. Dalrymple. Her face had been colourless before; it was now ghastly; but it was the hopeless misery in her eyes which affected Borrowdean most deeply. She was like a woman who, at one stroke, had seen swept away the cherished hopes of years of hardship and repression. Even the capacity to suffer seemed to have been taken from her. She presented an appearance of passivity and total apathy; evinced no emotion whatever at the detective's summons and followed Borrowdean in silence.

As they came into the hall, Berenice went forward in her impulsive manner and, taking the housekeeper's hand, drew her into a chair by her side, screening her as much as possible from Chand Talsdad's scrutiny. Morna Dalrymple let her hand lie listlessly in Berenice's, but there was the flicker of emotion on her features and a sudden moisture in her eyes.

"I hope," said Berenice, addressing Mercedes Quero, "that you will ask Mrs. Dalrymple as few questions as possible. She is ill and ought to be in bed."

"I shall not need to ask her many questions,"

responded the detective gently, "but she must tell us the story of Sir Robert Grainger's death. It is time that the world knew it."

At mention of Sir Robert Grainger, Mrs. Dalrymple shook off her apathy. A flush dyed her cheeks, her eyes glittered.

"Why should I add infamy to any one's name because of him? He deserved to die! He was a monster of cruelty to every one—except to the girl he called his ward. He was good to her only because she was like a conscience to him. She reminded him of the crimes he had committed in India, and he hoped that by being good to the daughter of the man he had ruined and then murdered, he could beg off from punishment in the other world. He was obsessed with the fear of death—and no wonder! The only happy moment I knew from the time I entered his service as housekeeper was when I saw him lying dead in the library."

"You should have left his death to the agents of Brahma," spoke up Chand Talsdad in his heavy, sonorous voice. "You took it upon yourself because you hoped to get possession of the sacred ruby he had stolen. You dared to plan another violation of Brahma. You corrupted to your service that base creature"—his eyes now on the cringing Ahmed—"who forswore the gods of India and followed a foreign master over the seas."

"Grainger Sahib he—he saved my life in the jungle," whimpered Ahmed.

"And destroyed your soul," admonished the old priest harshly. "You dared to protect him against the vengeance of Brahma. You would warn him when the servitors of Brahma came to punish. *But*—when the Englishwoman with the pale face commanded you to kill—so that she might have the ruby—you killed—!"

Ahmed slid to his knees. "No, no! It is not I kill Grainger Sahib! Prince Kassim not believe that!"

"Prince Kassim," said Chand Talsdad severely, "would believe all an Englishwoman told him—he was the son of Mareluke. You, by cheating vengeance, will later know Brahma's wrath."

On his knees Ahmed dragged himself to Mrs. Dalrymple.

"Sahiba! You tell Chand Talsdad it not I who kill Grainger Sahib."

Morna Dalrymple raised her white face to the old priest's.

"Ahmed is telling the truth. He did not kill Sir Robert Grainger."

"Then who killed him?" demanded the old priest fiercely.

Morna Dalrymple dropped her face in her hands.

Berenice placed a kindly arm about her shoulders.

"Capt. Greville Coningsby killed Sir Robert Grainger," she said quietly.

Chand Talsdad turned upon her. "If you knew, why have you not told?"

Berenice met his eyes calmly. "Because I had no

interest in Sir Robert Grainger, dead or alive. It was not my business to tell."

Mercedes Quero, with a little gesture of command, checked the harsh speech on Chand Talsdad's lips. "Mrs. Dalrymple, I am going to ask you now to tell the story of Sir Robert's death. In return I shall tell the story of Kassim Bardai's death."

The detective's words caused a stir through the little gathering. Miss Egerton sat stiffly erect, a strained look about her features. Borrowdean knew that she was dreading to hear Max's name spoken. A glance of understanding passed between Berenice and Morna Dalrymple. The latter's face showed now a hopeless acquiescence. Ahmed, still crouched by her chair, presented a pitiful appearance of abject terror. He was acutely conscious of every movement on the part of the old priest; he seemed to be in a kind of paroxysm of guilty fear, and Borrowdean for the first time felt sorry for the poor wretch.

Inspector Burton, his jaw set more aggressively than ever, had quietly entered the hall and now stood, note-book and pencil in hand, waiting for the housekeeper to speak.

"I think it will be best," said Mercedes Quero in a crisp, business-like tone, "for you to state clearly the relation in which you stood to Sir Robert Grainger."

Mrs. Dalrymple raised her eyes. They held a world of bitterness. "I was legally his wife—morally his slave. Why he married me I don't

know, unless to make sure that I should not escape his persecutions. I was his lawful prey and he used his right to heap upon me every sort of humiliation and insult. He knew why I married him—to make a permanent home for myself and Leon, my poor boy. Oh, I paid for it!”

Leon! Borrowdean knew now why “Maaster Leon’s ” face had seemed so familiar.

Mrs. Dalrymple went on with her story in a dreary monotone, her features without expression save for the bitterness smouldering in her eyes. “I was a widow without friends, without money, and newly come from Australia when I secured through an advertisement in *The Times* the position of housekeeper here. Sir Robert had just returned from India and had with him Lona Bardai, then a child of three or four, and Ahmed who was butler and valet too. Sir Robert soon made it plain that he desired more than a housekeeper. At least I can say to his credit—or, that is, I thought then it was to his credit—that he suggested no mere temporary relation, only stipulated that the marriage should remain secret until it pleased him to announce the fact. Well, what could I do but accept? Leon was only five years old; I thought this marriage would secure him a home.” Mrs. Dalrymple gave a short, hard laugh. “Instead, it secured for him harsh treatment and even blows and made of him what you have seen, a drunken loafer.

"I endured all this for years—what else could I do—Sir Robert had bound me to him—and of course I was counting on his death. Who wouldn't have? Well, the inevitable happened finally; another man came into my life. He had made friends with Sir Robert for the purpose of robbing him later. I knew that, but he gave me compliments in place of abuse and I—I came to love him."

She looked around the hall with a little defiant gesture. Berenice gently pressed her hand. Chand Talsdad was visibly chafing with impatience, but he preserved silence. Ahmed was regarding Mrs. Dalrymple with the mournful eyes of a whipped dog.

After a moment she resumed the thread of her story. "This man—Capt. Coningsby,"—her voice shook over the name—"was a distant relative of Sir Robert's and he knew of his theft of the ruby and other crimes he had committed. He intended to make him give up the ruby by threatening disclosure. Then we were going away together. I had learned by that time that I had little to expect at Sir Robert's death. He intended everything to go to Lona Bardai and I could not prove the legality of our marriage. The clergyman who had married us and the witness were both dead, there had been some confusion over the licence and Sir Robert had taken the certificate from me and destroyed it. I had nothing to hope for except discovering the hiding-place of the ruby, and this was only indicated

by a paper in cypher which also was hidden. He intended to give the key of this cypher to Lona and also a clue to the hiding-place of the paper. He could not resist torturing even her by making the discovery of the ruby doubtful. For me he made it impossible.

"Capt. Coningsby, of course, knew of all this and he planned an interview with Sir Robert in which he intended to force him to give up the ruby. He had no thought of killing him, but he knew Sir Robert's violent nature and that he always carried with him a poisoned dagger as a protection against Hindu enemies. Capt. Coningsby persuaded me to steal this dagger so that Sir Robert would be unarmed in case, as was very likely, he should lose control of himself at this interview. I had no idea that Capt. Coningsby intended to carry the dagger with him. But he did, and both men lost control of themselves. The rest you know." Her voice was still emotionless.

"I shielded Capt. Coningsby. He and I together made the murder appear as much as possible the work of those Hindu enemies Sir Robert was always in fear of. I gained nothing by Sir Robert's death, Capt. Coningsby was financially and socially ruined so he stayed on here secretly and we searched for the ruby and the paper which would give a clue to its hiding-place. Capt. Coningsby needed money and he wanted excitement, so he revived the legend of the Cavalier robber, his ancestor as well as Sir

Robert's. His likeness to this man whose picture hangs in the dining-hall was rather striking, and by impersonating him, he got both money and excitement. Then Prince Kassim Bardai began to make attempts to get into the house; and for some reason he came to suspect that Capt. Coningsby had killed Sir Robert. From then until the day of his own death we both went in fear of our lives. I cannot say who killed Prince Kassim. I have told you all that I know."

Her words carried conviction and Mercedes Quero seemed content to accept them.

Chand Talsdad, however, was still unsatisfied. "Prince Kassim's death remains a mystery—the English detectives have so bungled the matter, things are done differently in India—but the rubies, the eyes of Brahma—"

Mercedes Quero interrupted him. "Brahma perhaps must remain blind indefinitely, but Prince Kassim's death is not to remain a mystery. English detectives are not so bungling after all. Lord Borrowdean, may I ask you to go once more to Mrs. Dalrymple's room and this time request Princess Lona Bardai to come here? Mrs. Dalrymple, you will kindly give his lordship the key to the priest's closet leading off your chamber. You will find the door to this closet, Lord Borrowdean, concealed behind the long mirror on the wall."

CHAPTER XXXI

GATHERING UP THE THREADS

It was a terrified little princess indeed whom Borrowdean discovered in the enclosure leading off Mrs. Dalrymple's chamber. He had no little difficulty in persuading her to accompany him to the hall when he had told her, in response to her tremulous question, that Chand Talsdad was there. Like Ahmed she seemed to stand in a kind of guilty fear of the old Hindu. At last, however, Borrowdean succeeded in convincing her that he was capable of protecting her against even Chand Talsdad.

But on the threshold of the hall, at sight of the old priest's stern face, her courage forsook her again, and she clung terrified to Borrowdean's arm.

"Buck up, little girl," he whispered consolingly, "there isn't anybody going to hurt you while I am here."

"You don't know—you don't understand," she shivered.

As a matter of fact, Chand Talsdad's gaze as it fastened upon Lona might have withered the courage of a more considerable person than this little Hindu girl.

"There are many things you must tell Miss Eger-

ton and her guests," said Mercedes Quero, addressing Lona in a purposely gentle tone. "First you must tell how you happened to be here in Mrs. Dalrymple's chamber."

Lona looked at her pitifully. "But you know—you know everything."

"The others do not," the detective answered, still very gently, "and I prefer that you tell your own story."

As Lona, after a glance of appeal at Mrs. Dalrymple, remained silent, the housekeeper suddenly spoke for her.

"I brought her here. I went at night to Mrs. Barker's lodging-house at the Bay Town and forced her to return with me. I hoped through her in some way to get possession of the two rubies."

"You did this at Capt. Coningsby's suggestion?" Mercedes Quero's voice became once more crisp and professional.

The flush that suffused Mrs. Dalrymple's face was her only answer, but it was sufficient.

Mercedes Quero turned again to Lona. "You must tell us now what you saw in the library here on the night your brother was killed."

Lona drew in her breath. "I shall not tell!" Her hands were clenched. She looked like a frightened, but very obstinate child.

"You will not harm Mr. Egerton by telling the truth," said the detective incisively. "He is already on his way to London where he will take the earliest

boat-train for Australia. We"—she nodded toward Inspector Burton, waiting grimly, pencil in hand, to take down whatever testimony might be wrung from Lona—"we have promised him safe conduct till he leaves the country."

"He—he is not to come back—ever?"

Borrowdean turned away that he might not see the misery in Lona's eyes.

"No; he will never come back." Mercedes Quero seemed to be forcing herself to treat this tragic-faced child with professional coldness. "I think that Miss Roydon, too, will never come back."

"Miss Roydon! He—he took *her* with him?"

Mercedes Quero nodded. "They went together." In spite of herself the detective's expression was compassionate.

A lightning-like change came over Lona's face. All its childlike appeal was gone; her mouth was hard, her eyes dry. She looked as her brother had looked when the hot blood of his East Indian forefathers had burst through the constraints of Western refinement. For the first time she forgot her fear of Chand Talsdad, forgot even his presence. She stepped nearer the detective, her slim, as yet unformed, figure trembling with the intensity of her passion.

"I will tell you what I saw in the library. My brother lay on the floor—he was dead—and Mr. Egerton was tearing the Azra El Kab from his breast. There was a dagger at Kassim's side and—and blood on Mr. Egerton's hands."

Miss Vandelia tried to smother a groan.

Berenice suddenly pressed forward. "For Miss Egerton's sake, if not for her nephew's, the whole truth should be told. Prince Kassim was dead before Max came into the library."

Burton's pencil dug eagerly into the pages of his note-book. Borrowdean, at that moment, was conscious only of a mad desire to snatch that pencil and break it and its owner into bits.

"How do you know that Prince Kassim was dead before Mr. Egerton came into the library?" Mercedes Quero asked quickly.

"I saw him lying dead on the floor before Mr. Egerton came in."

"You are sure of this?"

"Perfectly."

"And what makes you so sure of this?" demanded Burton in his most truculent tone.

Berenice met his bullying gaze with composure. "Because I looked in at the terrace door after I had seen that Prince Kassim was dead. Mr. Egerton was bending over his body. I thought he was discovering that he was dead, so I went away immediately—out on the cliffs."

"You didn't then," hectored Burton, "first lock the library inner door so the murder shouldn't be discovered by others?"

Berenice's composure was not to be shaken. "As I stated at the inquest, I locked the inner door when I first entered the room in order that no one should

interrupt my conversation with Prince Kassim. So far as I know, the door remained locked."

"It was locked when I came in from the terrace," spoke up Lona sharply. "I thought I would leave it so to—to help Mr. Egerton; but—but he," her voice broke—"he is a bad heart; he forgets what I do for him, what he promises me—"

Miss Egerton went forward resolutely and, drawing the girl back, forced her to sit down. "My nephew is not worthy of your thoughts. I am going to look after you from now on."

With a tenderness that Borrowdean for one had never observed in her before, Miss Egerton drew Lona's head down upon her breast, consoling her as one might have consoled a broken-hearted child. Lona clung gratefully to Max's aunt, sobbing out her griefs in the arms of the woman of whom hitherto she had always stood in awe.

Burton turned to Berenice. "Perhaps now, my Lady," his tone still truculent, "you will be good enough to explain how a piece of your gown came to be found in Kassim Bardai's hand."

"And perhaps, Mr. Burton," spoke up Mercedes Quero crisply, "you will be good enough to remember that I am conducting this inquiry."

Burton scowled. "Fire ahead with it then."

"I will tell you exactly what happened in the library between Kassim Bardai and myself," said Berenice quickly, before Mercedes Quero could address her. "The truth cannot harm the guilty per-

son now. As I testified at the inquest, I broke my engagement to Kassim Bardai in the library because he refused to fulfil a promise he had made to me. This promise concerned Capt. Coningsby. Prince Kassim had discovered that Greville had killed Sir Robert Grainger and also that he was the Red Cavalier. Prince Kassim considered that Greville by killing Sir Robert had not only prevented him from recovering the Azra El Kab ruby, but had also cheated him of his vendetta and his hope of appeasing Brahma's wrath against this whole family. For this Prince Kassim had determined to have Greville's life. I wanted to save Greville. I felt more or less responsible for the wreck he had made of everything—if I hadn't divorced him, I might have been able to put him on his feet again. Well, he appealed to me for help, I was sorry for him, awfully sorry, and Prince Kassim kept urging his love upon me. I knew I should always blame myself for anything worse that might happen to Greville, so finally I told Prince Kassim that I would marry him if he would give me his promise to let Greville alone. He gave me his promise, and then later, in the library that night, told me he could not keep it. When I refused to marry him as a consequence, he lost control of himself and showed me then the little respect which men of the East have for women. I repulsed him and that is how, Mr. Burton, a piece of my frock came to be found in his hand.

"I was about to call for help, when Greville,

dressed as the Cavalier, stepped in through the terrace door. Prince Kassim was so astounded at seeing Greville that he loosed his hold on me, and I ran out of the terrace door, out onto the cliffs. I felt that I could not endure Kassim Bardai's presence another instant. Then, after a few minutes on the cliffs, I thought of what might happen between him and Greville and I went back to the library. Greville was gone, but Kassim Bardai lay on the floor—dead! I think I was half-crazed by the horror of it all, my head seemed to be bursting, and I ran back to the cliffs again. Greville came to me there a few minutes later. He was in a pitiful state of terror. At first he denied that he had killed Kassim Bardai, but he finally saw how useless denial was and said something which has been haunting me ever since: 'I did it for your sake—because of the insult he offered you. Now it's up to you to get me out of this mess.'"

Borrowdean's indignation against Coningsby swelled. Of course he was just cad enough to hold this over Berenice in order to impose the more effectually on her generous nature.

Chand Talsdad, while Berenice was speaking, had not removed his stern eyes from her face. Ahmed, too, was watching her with fixity. It seemed to Borrowdean that there was a sort of incredulous relief on his features.

Morna Dalrymple broke the brief silence that had fallen. "I do not believe, as I have told you re-

peatedly, that Capt. Coningsby killed Kassim Bardai. Capt. Coningsby is dead, and why blacken his memory more than is necessary?"

Berenice turned to her with a quick glance of sympathy. "It is true there is only circumstantial evidence against Greville. If it makes you happier to believe him innocent of this crime, I hope you will continue to believe it."

"It is more than belief," cried Mrs. Dalrymple passionately; "to me it is certainty. I have not only Greville's word—he never thought it worth while to lie to me—but I have the testimony of my own eyes. I was outdoors near the library the greater part of that evening. When Greville entered through the terrace door, he had just left me. He did not intend that either you or Kassim Bardai should see him. You were quarrelling and he hoped to slip in without being observed. His purpose was—well, I suppose you can guess what it was—he needed money. You know as well as I do that he stood in deadly fear of Kassim Bardai; he would never have had the courage to kill him, and he did *not* have the time. I saw you run out from the library, and less than half a minute later Greville ran out too. He was running *from* Kassim Bardai, for I saw the Hindu spring to the door as though to pursue him, and then some person—I couldn't make out whether it was a man or a woman—moved away from the shadow of the house and entered through

the terrace door. I did not stop to see what happened then—Capt. Coningsby called to me.”

“A no end remarkable tale, Mrs. Dalrymple,” remarked Burton with the exasperating drawl which he assumed at times.

Mrs. Dalrymple flushed. “I didn’t expect any one to believe me”—a world of bitterness in her tone.

“I believe you, Mrs. Dalrymple.”

Mercedes Quero met with a slight and baffling smile the amazed glances bent upon her.

“It was you, Mrs. Dalrymple, was it not, who unlocked the library door in the interval between Ahmed’s discovering that it was locked and his announcing of the fact to Miss Egerton?”

“Yes, it was I. Lady Berenice had already told me that she believed Capt. Coningsby had killed Kassim Bardai. I wished to make sure that the Hindu was really dead. I turned the lock with a duplicate key, but before I could open the door I heard people coming from the ballroom, and so I hurried away.”

Borrowdean took occasion here—he could not have told just why—to glance at Ahmed. Once more he was struck by the abject terror in the brown man’s face.

Lona still sat with her head on Miss Egerton’s breast, catching her breath now and then with a heartrending sob. The means and the author of her brother’s death were of far less import to the little Hindu than the desertion of the man who had once

seemed the *beau ideal* of her girlish dreams. Miss Egerton, still with that greyness to her features, was stroking Lona's dark hair, but abstractedly, and Borrowdean knew that her thoughts too were with Max.

"You were saying," pursued Mercedes Quero, still addressing Mrs. Dalrymple, "that you saw some person move away from the shadow of the house and enter through the terrace door, and that you could not make out whether this was a man or a woman. But you must have gained some impression of the person's sex from the dress."

Mrs. Dalrymple shook her head. "From the very brief glimpse I had, I judged that the person was one of the guests in masquerade costume, and it appeared to be a costume that could be worn by either a man or a woman."

Mercedes Quero turned quickly to Ahmed. "What happened when you entered the library through the terrace door?"

Ahmed stared at her with mingled amazement and terror. "It not I, Sahiba, who enter through the terrace door."

"Be careful what you say," the detective warned him.

"It not the terrace door, Sahiba," he protested earnestly. "I do not go outside the house all that evening—I will swear it—so it cannot be the terrace door I enter through."

"Ah! but you did enter the library before calling Miss Egerton."

The Hindu turned a sickly yellow-white. "I have not said so, Sahiba!"

"You do not need to." Mercedes Quero's voice became more severe. "It is known that you entered the library directly after Lady Berenice and Capt. Coningsby left it. When you left it, Kassim Bardai was dead."

"I did not kill him, Sahiba!" The Hindu's voice rose almost to a shriek.

Mercedes Quero gave a peculiar smile. "Can you prove that you did not?"

Ahmed started to burst forth into a torrent of avowals of innocence, then suddenly checked himself. "I cannot prove!"

With the admission, he lost all command of himself, and dropped again to his knees, grovelling in terror at the detective's feet.

Chand Talsdad strode over to his compatriot and stood looking down at him with a sort of majestic contempt.

"Miserable deserter of Brahma, it is not for you to gain glory by falsely confessing to be the avenger of Brahma."

The old priest turned to Mercedes Quero and drew himself up proudly. "It is I who killed Kassim Bardai. Like Marelake, his father, he would have deserted and betrayed Brahma for the English—for an English woman."

Again Berenice shivered under his glance. Borrowdean quietly interposed himself between them.

Ahmed had raised his head and was staring up at Chand Talsdad with that expression of fascinated terror with which he ordinarily regarded him.

"You shall know the truth now," the old priest went on in his sonorous voice. "It was I who caused Kassim Bardai to break the impious promise he had made to Lady Berenice Coningsby. Also I commanded him to see her no more. The son of Mareluke was not to be trusted with an English woman. But he disobeyed me; he would go to this masquerade ball. I knew the influence this woman would have upon him, and I went there to see that he gave her no more promises. I made Ahmed play for me the spy. He told me that Kassim Bardai was in the library with this woman. I went to the terrace door to put an end to this interview, but before I could go in, Lady Berenice ran out. She was followed a minute later by the man, Coningsby.

"I stepped into the library. One would say Mareluke was alive again in his son. Kassim Bardai was mad with passion for the English woman. He openly defied me, flaunted in my face a spangled piece torn from her gown, and swore that for the sake of holding her in his arms again he would denounce the gods of India, and Brahma might forever go unavenged. I killed the blasphemer as he stood there. And this was execution, not murder, as you English call it."

There fell a tense silence. The gaze of all was fixed upon the old Hindu with a kind of awe, ap-

proaching, admiration. He, on his part, presented an aspect of lofty calm, mixed with contempt for those who failed to comprehend his motives.

Burton, that ever zealous bloodhound of the law, was the first to shake off the atmosphere of Eastern gods and their vendettas which the sight of this majestic old priest, assured of the righteousness of his act, conjured up, and to return to the realities of twentieth century England.

"You can give any fancy name you like to the killing of Kassim Bardai," he said gruffly, "but here in this country, you'll answer to the charge of murder."

As he spoke, he advanced toward Chand Talsdad with the obvious intention of clapping handcuffs upon his wrists, but, before he could carry out his purpose, the old Hindu had snatched a small phial from the folds of his robe and swallowed the contents.

The poison had an almost instant effect. A grey-ness spread over the East Indian's features; he staggered back.

"It is not for unbelievers to pass judgment on a servant of Brahma."

These were his last words.

CHAPTER XXXII

AFTER THE STORM

Two or three days later, after the excitement caused by Chand Talsdad's rather spectacular death had partly subsided, Mercedes Quero found time to give Miss Egerton and Borrowdean an insight of the inner workings of the case and the line of reasoning which she herself had pursued.

"I always follow to a certain extent the process of elimination," the detective explained. "Take, for instance, Burton's first suspect, Lady Berenice. The most superficial reader of character would know that a person of so frank and open a nature could never successfully conceal her guilt and would very probably scorn to do so. You remember the frankness with which she refused to answer certain incriminating questions, although she knew the interpretation that would be put upon her silence. But, although I mentally acquitted her of actual guilt, I had no doubt from my observations of her that she either knew the murderer or thought she did and was trying to shield him. You see, I had been studying this case before Chand Talsdad engaged me to hunt up his rubies. Twin Turrets has been of interest to me ever since the murder of Sir

Robert Grainger, and, if it had not been for other more urgent cases, I should have tried on my own account to solve this murder.

"Lady Berenice's unhappy married life was a matter of common knowledge and I soon found out by inquiring of certain money-lenders the cause of her recent desperate betting at the races. She was staggering under not only her own debts—and you'll have to admit, Lord Borrowdean, that she is not a particularly frugal person—but also under the debts of that precious husband of hers, and was trying to buy up the money-lenders. These gentlemen had discovered that Coningsby had ventured to return to England at the risk of arrest for various crimes. The payment of his debts was the price of their silence. For a short while I allowed myself to be misled as Burton was, in thinking Coningsby the murderer of Kassim Bardai as well as of Sir Robert Grainger. It was simple enough to prove that he had killed Grainger—that is, as soon as I discovered that he was the Red Cavalier and the lover of Morna Dalrymple. These two facts I discovered during the day I spent at Twin Turrets in the capacity of housemaid—in fact, as Essy Grieve's predecessor."

The detective gave a little laugh. "I shall have to confess that I was dismissed without a 'character.' Mrs. Dalrymple came upon me at night, prowling about the house, and dismissed me on the spot. But I had found out more even than I had hoped to. I was morally convinced also that Mrs. Dal-

rymple had been Grainger's wife, in spite of the aspersions cast upon her at the inquest. She was too clever a woman to allow herself simply to be entangled with a testy old reprobate. She wished to better herself in the world, and in addition she had a son to provide for—I discovered that, too. Of course, she was Grainger's wife, and of course he ill-treated her—he ill-treated every one except the little Hindu girl as I learned by inquiry. Then—enter the lover—and the result was easily to be guessed at. But, to prove Coningsby the murderer of Kassim Bardai was another matter. As Mrs. Dalrymple said, he had not the opportunity to kill the Hindu. I happened to be trailing Coningsby that night, and I can account for all of his movements from the time he left Mrs. Barker's house in the Bay Town to go to a cave along the shore where his Cavalier costume was hidden, and from there approached Twin Turrets. With my own eyes I can vouch for the truth of every one of Mrs. Dalrymple's statements regarding his actions on that night. He was *not* in the library long enough to kill Kassim Bardai.

“I, too, saw the person whom we know now to have been Chand Talsdad, come out from the shadow of the house and enter the library. But I took him to be one of the guests in fancy costume and so I continued to follow Capt. Coningsby, for I hoped to discover him in some act which would make it possible for me to have him arrested as the Cavalier.

You understand that both Burton and I had known for some days that he was the Cavalier, but we had not been able to find sufficiently definite evidence to make his conviction certain. When I learned that a murder had been committed while I had been trailing a person who did nothing more criminal that night than bully Lady Berenice on the cliffs—I could not, of course, get near enough to hear their conversation—and then return to his cave on the beach, I called myself some rather hard names. Still, from these observations of mine I was able at once to eliminate two other suspects in addition to Lady Berenice: Coningsby, and Mrs. Dalrymple, who had been in his company from the time he reached the vicinity of Twin Turrets until he entered the terrace door.

“This left then in my mind as possible suspects: Ahmed, Maxwell Egerton, Lona, Ethelyn Roydon, and Chand Talsdad. The first four apparently had the opportunity as I found out by making careful inquiries among the guests in regard to the different periods when they were absent from the ballroom. As to incentive, Ahmed and Lona both seemed to be in Kassim Bardai’s power and presumably would welcome his death as a relief from the bondage he held them in. The Azra El Kab ruby was incentive enough for the other two, *but*—I had seen an unknown person enter the library from the outside, at or near the time when Kassim Bardai must have been killed. Now I, like Mrs. Dalrymple, could not

swear to the sex of this person, but I had the impression that it was a man, and a man too powerfully-built to be Maxwell Egerton.

“Later I tried to identify this person with some one of the guests from the neighbouring houses, but I did not succeed. I even asked Burton’s aid but he stamped the whole story as ‘bally rot’ and persisted in believing that Coningsby had had sufficient time in which to kill Kassim Bardai in spite of all I could say. This attitude of Burton’s threw me entirely upon my own resources and for a while I seemed to be facing a blind wall. Then, unexpectedly, Chand Talsdad engaged me to search for his rubies. The moment I saw him in his Hindu garb, I thought of the mysterious person I had seen enter the library. I questioned him as narrowly as I could without arousing his suspicions. When I discovered that he not only cared nothing about apprehending Prince Kassim’s murderer, but was even unwilling to discuss the matter, I became mortally convinced of his guilt. Finally, by continued questioning, I led him on to betray some bitterness against Kassim Bardai. That was what I wanted. He had then incentive. I could learn nothing of his movements on the night of the ball from his servants, but I found out a good deal by putting Ahmed through a sort of ‘third degree.’ He knew more than he should about the murder and he regarded Chand Talsdad with a superstitious fear that made him clay in the old priest’s hands. I saw that

no ordinary measures would make him betray Chand, and so, as a last resort, I tried to terrorize him into speaking. I was more successful than I had dared to hope. As far as I am concerned, the case is closed. It is for the government to decide what shall finally become of the rubies. I wonder if I have made every point clear to you both?"

Borrowdean swung reflectively the black ribbon of his monocle. "I suppose it was Chand Talsdad, eh, who put those bullets of salt on the little girl's plate and also on Max's?"

The detective shook her head. "No; it was Ahmed. Chand Talsdad by threats based on the superstitious fear in which he, as a priest of Brahma, held Ahmed, forced him to do this. He suspected, as he told me, that Mr. Egerton had stolen the Azra El Kab and that Lona knew it and was shielding him. He hoped to terrorize Lona into betraying Mr. Egerton."

"That point is clear," said Borrowdean slowly. "The old chap, of course, knew that Ahmed would never say a word about his being around the house the night of the murder, and he wasn't mistaken in his man. But I don't exactly understand why Ahmed should report the murder—that is, why he should tell Miss Egerton that the library door was locked and so call attention to the room. He must have known there had been some sort of a scene between Prince Kassim and Chand."

"It was Mrs. Dalrymple who ordered him to do

this," answered the detective. "Lady Berenice had told her that Capt. Coningsby had killed Kassim Bardai. Mrs. Dalrymple knew that this was impossible as Coningsby had not had the time, but the poor woman was so upset that she could wait no longer for the murder to be discovered and some solution attempted. For the first time she had difficulty in persuading Ahmed to obey her—he always had obeyed her with a doglike devotion. This devotion explains the hatred which he always felt toward Coningsby—he must have known that this man was using her love for his own purposes. As I was saying, Mrs. Dalrymple finally persuaded Ahmed to inform Miss Egerton of the locked door, but when she saw that he was actually going she became desperately afraid that Coningsby would somehow be accused of the murder, so she unlocked the library door with the intention of satisfying herself that he had left no traces of his having been in that room. The sound of your footsteps, Miss Egerton, drove her in terror to the servants' hall. That explains, I think, the mystery of the locked and suddenly unlocked door.

"And now"—with a hurried glance at a tiny gold watch—"it is time for me to be driving to the station if I am to catch the next train to London. If you think, Miss Egerton, that I have left any point unexplained, please remember that my head now is full of the murder at Treverton House. I have

scarcely thought of anything else since I received the telegram asking me to take the case."

Borrowdean assisted the detective into the waiting wagonette and then joined Berenice on the terrace. She was watching the setting sun gild the waves of the North Sea with ruddy gold.

At Borrowdean's step, she turned with a welcoming, but half sad smile.

"Our last chance, Reggie, to watch the sun set over the North Sea. In spite of everything that has happened here, I believe I have grown fond of this wild spot. I shall be almost sorry to leave for London in the morning."

"I shall not," Borrowdean spoke with decision. "This has been a bally unpleasant house party for the hostess and every one concerned. Miss Egerton is no end sensible to plan a trip on the Continent and try to forget it all."

"I am glad she is going to take Lona with her," said Berenice. "Travelling will make the poor child think of something besides Max. Oh, by the way, Reggie, have you heard how kind Miss Egerton has been to Mrs. Dalrymple? She has engaged Malcolm French of Lincoln's Inn Fields to put forward Mrs. Dalrymple's claim to Sir Robert Grainger's estate."

Borrowdean gloomily dangled his monocle. "'Pon my word, Berenice, everybody but me seems to have people to look after them. I hear that some old maid cousin of yours has asked you to finish out the summer at her place in Kent."

Berenice made a little *moue*. "Yes; but I had rather stifle in London, than listen to Cousin Serena's dissertations on the wickedness of my ways. I'm not going to Kent, Reggie. Perhaps you will look in on me once in a while. It will be dull in London."

The sun brought out the auburn glints in Berenice's hair; the dusky violet hue of her eyes seemed more pronounced; her lips more red.

Borrowdean caught both her hands in his. "Berenice! you don't need to stifle and be dull in London. Don't you think we could 'hit it off,' eh? That is, I mean, couldn't you—couldn't you—ah—contrive to marry me?"

A wonderfully tender expression came into Berenice's face. "Dear old boy, I'm awfully fond of you. I think we might try to 'hit it off.'"

THE END

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